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## Snowball in the Spring

EMMET LAVERY

*EMMET LAVERY, president of the Screen Writers' Guild, is chairman of the over-all AAA committee of SWG. He is an active member of the Dramatists Guild, author of The Magnificent Yankee, which has just wound up a cross-country tour.*

UNLIKE the rolling stone that gathered no moss, the snowball tossed out in the early spring by the AAA committee of the Screen Writers Guild has gathered a lot of snow — and a lot of momentum.

Thanks to the formal cooperation of the Council of the Authors League of America, approximately 9,000 copies of the special (March) supplement on AAA were distributed to members of the four guilds of the League. Above and beyond this, 4,000 additional copies were sent by the Screen Writers Guild to unaffiliated writers and members of the arts and professions throughout the country.

Today, the proposals advanced in the AAA supplement are officially before the member guilds of the League and the Council of the League for official consideration. In due time the member guilds will be asked to ballot on the AAA and the full Council of the Authors League of America will be asked to decide, on the basis of this balloting, whether this particular form of licensing shall be put into operation.

To prepare intelligently for this voting, the AAA committee of the Screen Writers' Guild is proposing to the Council of the Authors League of America that a

sub-committee of the AAA committee of the Screen Writers' Guild go East in the near future to:

- (1) confer with the full Council of the Authors League of America
- (2) confer with the individual boards of the member guilds of the League
- (3) conduct an all-day seminar in New York — and perhaps other regional centers — for detailed analysis and discussion of the plan by League members.\*

West Coast members of the Authors Guild have already gone on record, by a vote of 38 to 6, in favor of the AAA licensing program as outlined in the special supplement of the Screen Writer. Two hours of solid discussion were devoted by this group to the project at a recent meeting chaired by Albert Maltz. James Cain, Morris Cohn and Emmet Lavery spoke in favor of the AAA plan and Rupert Hughes led the discussion against it.

Meanwhile strong indications have been received from England that members of the Screen Writers Association look with a friendly eye on many of the proposals advanced in AAA. While they would probably not approach the problem of licensing with the same kind of machinery in England, they are keen to cooperate in any universal program which will establish the principle of licensing as against the principle of outright sale.

(In this connection it is worth noting that, in discussions of licensing in England, the phrase "assign-

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\*As this issue of THE SCREEN WRITER was going to press, word was received from New York that the Licensing Committee of the Authors' League of America is preparing to make a formal report on AAA to the Council of the League in the near future. It is not certain, naturally, that the final disposition of AAA will be made according to the procedure outlined above. It is quite possible that the Licensing Committee may recommend that the whole question be determined in, and by, the Council of the League.



ment of copyright" is used to indicate outright transfer of ownership. That is, over there, the issue is stated as the issue of "licensing" versus the issue of "assignment of copyright." Here, in discussing AAA, we have of course used the phrase "assignment of copyright" as a phrase subsidiary to, not hostile to, the idea of licensing. With us we have used the phrase as meaning "trusteeship of copyright." The distinction in use and meaning is important to remember because while in one sense of the word our English colleagues are consistently opposed to "assignment of copyright," actually our position and theirs is identical at the moment. We are both for licensing and against outright sale under any terms.)

It would be bad reporting, however, to suggest that AAA is sweeping the country. It is too new, too comprehensive, to be disposed of in a few easy resolutions and generalities. The truth is many writers still have quite a few reservations about AAA, some of them valid and reasonable, some of them invalid and irrational.

The position of the Screen Writers' Guild at this point is a very simple one. We say now, as we have said many times before: this is *one* form of licensing, it is a form in which we believe, but if it isn't the best form, give us the one that is better.

We realize, for instance, that many members of the Dramatists Guild do not take easily to the theory of "assignment of copyright" even though the proposed assignment is a very limited one and would be, in fact, a revocable trusteeship. They do not take easily to this theory because they have been able to operate otherwise in the theatre. They have been able to operate under a Minimum Basic Agreement.

We understand this position and we can appreciate the logic of it, for many of us have been members of the Dramatists Guild for many years. But we also realize that *licensing in four fields* can not be projected without some comprehensive machinery to implement that licensing and to date we have heard of no over-all machinery which would provide that implementation. True, the Authors Guild is considering the advisability of a film negotiator — like the one in the Dramatists Guild — as one possible method of regulating the licensing of the material of Authors Guild members that might be sold to motion pictures. But this is *not* the same thing as over-all negotiation in the fields of theatre, radio, television and films. It is a limited approach to one section of the problem and it is a very good approach. It is a step in the right direction but we in the Screen Writers' Guild think similar steps have to be taken by all guilds together: in effect, over-all, simultaneous negotiation in all fields. Through the

Authors League of America of course, but through some special machinery set up to do this particular job.

## 2

To date, the only hint as to a possible alternative to AAA — and it is only a hint, and perhaps an unintentional one at that — comes from George Middleton, veteran dramatist, in his excellent reissue of the pamphlet describing the operations of the Dramatists Guild Minimum Basic Agreement. Toward the end of this report, Mr. Middleton sagely observes:

"Healthy differences as to policies, which may arise within the League, should not weaken a common front through which alone can the common objectives, of benefit to all authors, be achieved. *To that end, Basic Agreements, I believe, should be negotiated to cover the entire field of authorship, in which European authors, who have asked our cooperation, should be invited to participate.*"

The italics, it should be noted, are those of Mr. Middleton. They raise a provocative question. Here, of course, is the ultimate of ultimates — one to which I think most members of the Screen Writers' Guild would subscribe without hesitation. But are we in a position to project such an agreement at the present time? Isn't that the last round in the licensing fight rather than the first round? A hundred members from each of the four guilds might easily put AAA into operation, if they were the holders of enough active copyrights, for the whole principle of AAA is that of a voluntary association of writers in a limited trusteeship. But it would take the common concerted action of at least five to seven thousand writers to make effectual a Compulsory Minimum Basic Agreement covering all fields.

As matters stand now, the League and its member guilds are firmly committed to the general principle of licensing and the accompanying theories of separation of copyrights and reversion for non-use. But no one has yet suggested the possible zero hour when this licensing program will take effect — and after which outright sales of literary property will no longer be countenanced by the League. And no one, with the exception of the Screen Writers' Guild, has come forward with a detailed over-all plan whereby such a licensing program might be projected through the League and its member guilds.

Locally, many playwrights and screen writers are already working at the theory of licensing, even though there is as yet no League machinery to implement it. They are able to do this because they are strong enough individually to ask for and to obtain seven and ten year licensing contracts, separation of copyrights and reversion for non-use. Others, not so fortunate, face the old



familiar pressures. In the catch-as-catch-can state of the so-called "package" market, outright sales are often effected with no provision for additional compensation to the original author in the event of a profitable resale. In the regular market most studios continue to insist on the preposterous legal fiction that the sale of property and/or literary services to the studio makes the studio performer the "author" of the property. And in recent weeks we have seen an intriguing variation on this situation in which an individual producer in his individual capacity asked a writer to certify that the producer was, in fact, the complete and sole creator of the literary property that he had just bought from the writer.

Appropriately enough, relatively little attention has been given by the press throughout the country to the revised AAA plan as printed in the March supplement, although columns of vituperative comment were hurled at the Screen Writers' Guild and its members when the plan was first discussed some months before. The reason for the silence, naturally, is not hard to understand. The revised AAA plan is a carefully thought out document, fair, honest, and democratic, with every guarantee possible to the individual writer that he is creating nothing more than a revocable trusteeship. There isn't much argument, in law and logic, that can be brought against it. A few points here and there perhaps but not many and none of the kind that give comfort to the creators of scare headlines in the five star finals.

True, some very sincere writers — not members of the American Writers Association, organized for the sole purpose of destroying AAA — just don't like the idea of assignment of copyright in any form, no matter how limited. They dispose of copyright every year of course to publishers and studios but they hesitate at the idea of trusteeing any part of it to a group of fellow writers. There are also a few agents, here and there, who have been a little slow to realize that AAA is not an agent and would not replace the agencies. And, it must be admitted, on the basis of questionnaires that have already come in, there are a few younger writers who are frank enough to admit that they would always prefer an outright sale to any form of licensing. They want the bird in the hand even though it might grow to be a bigger bird if they let it have its wings.

### 3

Finally, there is still a little East Coast-West Coast tension. Not very much. Nothing that wouldn't dissolve quickly when facing a common enemy. Some writers in New York feel that some individual observations in the AAA supplement with respect to the eastern guilds are not borne out by the facts. Others feel that the AAA

is just some kind of screen writing dream for screen writers who have no knowledge of other fields. A few, to be perfectly frank, still think most writers west of the Los Angeles river are blood brothers to one Joseph Stalin and accordingly want no part of us.

Time of course will dissipate most of these last objections, time and detailed study of the Questions and Answers section of the AAA supplement. As for the few Marxists in our midst, whose initial enthusiasm for AAA may have disturbed some people, I have no hesitation in repeating now a prediction which I have made many times before: in the last analysis, or, if you prefer, in the last round of the good fight for licensing, we will be hearing less and less from the brethren on the far Left. They will probably not be hostile to AAA or whatever the final form of licensing may be. They will naturally go along with any plan that in the long run improves the standing of writers, especially the financial standing. But, as one of our articulate conservatives pointed out some time ago, the whole battle for licensing and for the AAA is a highly capitalistic manoeuvre designed to take a little more capital from one group of capitalists — producers, publishers, radio chains, television — and put in the pockets of another group of capitalists, the writers. It is not something that squares with the Communist Party line. It has no compulsions. It is open to everyone. It has no control of content. It works for the small writer as well as for the big writer. It is the most voluntary form of association that has ever been proposed for American writers: it is a limited, revocable trusteeship administered by democratically elected delegates from the four guilds of the Authors League of America. The Kremlin would not understand it nor care for it.

At this point it might be timely to point out one or two more obvious facts: in the Screen Writers' Guild, as in most writing guilds, we have no political or religious screening of membership. We do not even qualify the writers who become eligible for active membership: the studios, who employ screen writers, provide that qualification by providing enough employment (26 weeks) to make them eligible for active membership. The rest of our members, at the moment about 200, come to us on assignment (exchange) from brother guilds in the Authors League of America. So obviously we are not a front for the Communist Party nor a recruiting agent for the Kremlin. We are just a typical cross-section of American writers, people with the average worries, hopes, and ambitions — people naive enough to believe that the struggle for a better world begins with a struggle for a better art, people naive enough to believe that one way to better the art is to better the man who creates it, to give him just a bit



more to say about it than the man who is merely going to sell it.

But is it art, asks a mocking voice in the back of the house? Well, if it isn't, brother — whose fault is it? Who sold it down the river, year after year, and got a mess of pottage for his pains — yes, and only *one* mess of pottage at that! No one forced our novelists and playwrights and screen writers to sell outright *all* their rights in all these fields. But they did and that is why, in pictures at least, the remakes of famous plays and novels are so seldom equal to the first attempt. The further you get away from the original author the less you have in the end.

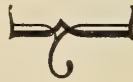
Yes, this is the same kind of fight that the Dramatists Guild had in the theatre. Only longer and tougher and nastier. We can't win it by fighting each other. We can only win it by standing together wherever writers are found.

And so we in the Screen Writers' Guild say: let's stop talking about licensing. Let's begin to license. Let's set a stop-date. Let's have thorough study and a prompt vote on AAA. We still think AAA is the best form of licensing we have seen so far but we're willing to be shown if somebody has found a better way. Let's have the alternatives, if any, and let's have them soon . . . very soon.

The way we look at it, that was a pretty good snowball we threw out in the early spring. And there's still a lot of snow clinging to it, even in the heat of June. There will still be a lot of snow on it, when the frost is on the ground in the Fall.

But let's not fool around too long with this thing called licensing. The best snowball in the world won't last forever. So —

If it isn't *this* snowball, what snowball is it?



## Statement on Thomas Committee

In a statement widely quoted by the nation's press, Emmet Lavery, president of the Screen Writers' Guild demanded that accredited channels instead of Representative J. Parnell Thomas' "Un-American" Committee undertake the job of investigating truly subversive activity in the motion picture industry. He suggested that the FBI is the proper agency for such work.

Despite Rep. Thomas' statement, as published, that "90 per cent of Communist infiltration in Hollywood is to be found among screen writers," Mr. Lavery, head of the writers' organization, had at the time of going to press not been summoned or invited to appear before the investigators then sitting in Los Angeles.

"I doubt very much," said Mr. Lavery, "if any subversive elements are likely to be trapped by punches telegraphed in advance by Congressman Thomas in eight-column scare headlines.

"Writers are always being called Communists," Mr. Lavery pointed out. "It has been a favorite indoor and outdoor sport for a good many years. We may have a few Communists in the Screen Writers' Guild, just as there may be a few Communists in all of the professions and the arts. We do not employ them; we do not qualify them for their membership in this Guild. Oddly enough, it is the employing studios who qualify all of our writers for active membership, for unless they are employed by a

studio, they cannot become active members. We accept all our members without regard for political or religious affiliation.

"I have been President of the Screen Writers' Guild for three years, and I am confident that the solid democratic worth of the Guild speaks for itself. And it may be interesting to Mr. Thomas to know that as early as October 7, 1946, I appeared voluntarily at the local headquarters of the FBI, following my testimony before the Committee of Senator Jack Tenney, and formally placed myself and the Guild at the command of the FBI for any investigations that they might care to make. They told me at that time that they had no questions to ask."



# An Approach to Pictures

JAY RICHARD KENNEDY

*JAY RICHARD KENNEDY is a writer-producer who discusses here some problems of production and the place of writers in the motion picture industry.*

PROBABLY any author who attempts to tell a story of our times faithfully and with regard to the social needs of today will find himself confronting certain difficulties. He will run afoul of obsolete restrictions. Or he will feel the resistance of those forces which oppose necessary change wherever they find it.

In gaining permission to use hitherto inaccessible information files in writing the story of the Treasury Department's Bureau of Narcotics in cooperation with the Department's Customs and Coast Guard Bureaus, I encountered little or none of the traditional red tape of government bureaucracy. When the officials were satisfied that I would not distort the material to suit cheap, stereotyped theatrical needs, their intelligent cooperation was forthcoming. The first real obstacle was the notice from the Production Code Administration that the story was in violation of the existing code, which forbade the dramatization on the screen of illicit traffic in narcotics. However, the Motion Picture Asso-

ciation of America, while pointing out that the story (tentatively titled) *Assigned to Treasury*, was technically outside the pale of its code, nevertheless, agreed at the same time that the story was in good taste and in the public interest.

The MPAA has its own practical, hard-headed reasons for understanding that real stories must be told if the world market is to be won. In the domestic market it is aware of a stirring deep in the bones of John and Mary Smith, who were subjected to the violent imposition of a depression, followed by a global war and who now confront the unsolved problems of tomorrow. Our American audiences need a celluloid mirror of their lives and aspirations. English, French, Italian and Russian films are dealing maturely with realistic themes. We can do no less and compete successfully. Undoubtedly the MPAA is conscious of this fact.

In any case, the code was amended to allow for the screen portrayal of the worldwide effort to curb the illicit traffic in narcotics. Though many factors contributed to the decision of MPAA to amend its Production Code, I believe that the basic one was the appeal by Commissioner of Narcotics Anslinger that the picture be made. That appeal came as the result of the Treasury Department belief that the world would benefit from the realistic presentation of this global story, and also as the result of Commissioner Anslinger's faith that the best interests of his bureau had not been, and therefore would not be sacrificed for the purposes of a quick theatrical advantage in bringing the story to the screen.

But the amendment of the Code did not end our problems. In many respects, it began them. Immediately a hysterical campaign set in against the picture, against the amendment, even against the industry. The real nature of this campaign has not been opposition to the narcotics issue, the core of this opposition is apparently the belief that the Production Code is a sacrosanct instrument, and that the establishment of any precedent

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When JAY RICHARD KENNEDY came to Hollywood 15 months ago he had behind him an unusual record of achievement as an economist, financier and special aide to the federal government in both the national and international fields. In 1945 he was called upon by the Treasury Department to help smooth the way for the Bretton Woods agreement. While working with the department, he was impressed by the great range of its law enforcement activities, and by the fact that its Bureau of Narcotics as far back as 1935 proved the practicality of the concept of cooperation between nations. He proposed to Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. and the Commissioner of Narcotics Harry J. Anslinger that he tell the story of that Bureau's work in cooperation with the Customs and Coast Guard Bureaus of Treasury. With the understanding that the essential facts remain in focus, they gave him access to hitherto closed files and later approved his story, as did the subsequent Secretaries of Treasury, Fred Vinson and John Snyder.

Feeling that the story was best suited to motion pictures, Mr. Kennedy came to Hollywood. Four major studios bid for the story. He chose to set up an independent corporation owned jointly by Sidney Buchman, as producer, and himself as associate producer and author of the original story and screenplay. Believing his brief but intensive experience in Hollywood illumines some current problems encountered in motion picture making, the editors of THE SCREEN WRITER asked Mr. Kennedy to discuss frankly his approach to film writing and producing.



for seriously amending it is dangerous. Outcries against the screen portrayal of the fight against the international illegal narcotics traffic has been, in my opinion, used as a smokescreen to obscure something of importance to the entire industry — namely, its right of self-government and the duty and even necessity of change to meet the conditions of our changing world.

## 2

In preparation for writing the treatment of *Assigned to Treasury*, I studied over eighty motion pictures and then did "homework" analyzing the screenplays from which these pictures had been made. This study disclosed an interesting difference in the prewar technique of Hollywood picture making and the wartime so-called "documentary technique," a difference which I had to understand if the experiences of skilled veterans in both fields were to teach me anything in preparation for the writing of my first treatment and screenplay.

The prewar film technique seemed to concern itself most actively with the Great Man, the individual who bends all situation to his fabulous will. The story was placed at the complete service of validating this one unusual hero. (*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*) Supporting players and plot action were subordinated to make the solitary jewel shine. I may be wrong, but it seemed to me that the evil of the star system, rather than creating this technique, emerged out of it, and that this technique, in turn, was created by the unrealistic social climate of the pre-depression and prewar years. I learned a great deal from this technique about swift and oblique theatrical revelations of what *purport* to be character.

However, in the end, these revelations remained false for my purposes, for they were set forth in unreal situational context. I had assured the Treasury Department that I would be faithful to the facts in the file (which in theatrical terms meant the basic dramatic situations). Against that objective, the prewar technique became "make-believe" in an unusable sense. The lone individual never bends dramatic situation (otherwise known as environment) or supporting players (otherwise definable as the community as seen from the protagonist's viewpoint) to his own exclusive will. Even the "status-quo individual" is no exception. With the aid of the weight of environment he hamstringing the efforts of others to reshape it. Environment, as we all know, takes one powerful lot of bending before it yields. It acts upon the individual with at least as much force as the individual, no matter how heroic, acts upon it. In *Assigned to Treasury* a consideration of this social truth ceased to be academic.

The other technique, the wartime "documentary"

like the prewar Hollywood technique referred to above, likewise taught me many important things. How to find people and events in their native habitat (among other things, by actually bringing a camera there!), the power of understatement, of matter-of-factness, the attention to small, but exciting detail which creates the illusion of reality, faith in the dramatic values implicit in environment (dramatic situation) which prevents gilding the lily or distorting it. All this proved invaluable. Yet, taken by itself — for my purposes — it seemed to exaggerate in one direction as the prewar technique exaggerated in another. (I am not referring to Hollywood wartime films like *Sahara*, *Wake Island*, *Destination Tokyo*, which attempted the beginnings of a synthesis between the two techniques. I refer to the government documentary film, a technique almost as old as entertainment film making itself) which had its origin in visual education. In it, the protagonist is subordinated to dramatic situation.

During the war this technique dealt with a great global social crisis. To meet that crisis the individual either subordinated or associated himself with the community in a joint effort to reshape the environment which created this crisis. But that could not have possibly meant that the individual was less important than the task he performed. Quite the reverse. It caused tremendous personality changes, making heroes out of ordinary men and thus making the individual more important than ever. The wartime documentary technique in many cases implied the opposite. How to load a gun, what to do for wounds, how to behave when captured, was treated more importantly than the person who performed these deeds. We learned no more about people than was indispensable for carrying the documentary story forward.

Perhaps this over-simplification was born out of the social climate of a war for which we were not sufficiently prepared ideologically, in much the manner as the social climate of rugged individualism in the prewar period created the over-simplification of environment in prewar Hollywood film technique. In any event, I felt that technically, in writing *Assigned to Treasury* my task was to synthesize the best of both, striking a tone and style which authentically dramatized environment on the one hand and authentically and dramatically revealed the importance of the individual on the other. This meant neither environment nor character would be distorted to serve the other's needs.

Whether this synthesis has been achieved, remains of course to be seen. If it has been on film, it will be the result of the joint efforts in this direction, not only of myself, but in the first place of Sidney Buchman, the producer, and after him, of every other person seriously



involved in the project. I am sure that my colleagues, no less than I, live in anxious hope, rather than satisfied certainty. But whether we have succeeded or failed, one thing, I believe, remains true:

Out of the various efforts now being made in Hollywood to achieve this synthesis in both subject matter and style can come something new, better and more mature in picture making. My evidence that this can be done, is that it already has been done in *The Best Years of Our Lives*. In the past, the documentary technique bubbled along quietly under the surface of popular entertainment. It excited only an aesthetic, scholarly and frequently snobbish few. Running parallel, the Hollywood technique flashed its virtuosity profitably across the entertainment sky. The war exploded heaven and earth in more ways than one. It drew the documentary up out of its safe obscurity to educate and inspire millions of soldiers and other millions of people in liberated areas, supplying sufficient audience and opportunity to fulfill what was previously embryonic in its technique. That same upheaval brought "once-upon-a-non-existent-time" magnificently down to earth with *Sahara*, *Destination Tokyo*, *Edge of Darkness* and others. Inevitably, when the smoke cleared, these two strangers had to meet. In *The Best Years of Our Lives*, they did.

Before the first draft of my screenplay was completed, *The House on 92nd Street* made its debut. I did not feel about *The House* as I feel about *The Best Years of Our Lives*. While *The House* had a "newsreel authenticity" and a new approach to environment, which proved that the "factual style" could yield profitable dramatic entertainment, I believe it suffered from the same weaknesses as the wartime documentary technique in that it sacrificed deepened *characterization* for the purpose of emphasizing what was dramatic in *authentically presented situation*, (as differentiated from *Boomerang* which certainly does, in many respects, achieve this synthesis.)

In the process of dealing with my story, a working definition was developed with regard to the people in it.

I call it "documentary characterization." If the word "documentary" still has an odious or frightening, non-commercial sound, I readily accept other words like "authentic," "realistic," or "factual." All I mean, is a technique of unfolding character which is as dominant as the authentic factual revelation of dramatic situation and strikes the same tone and matter-of-fact spirit. By documentary characterization I mean a research into the human data to the point where the people in each scene stand with equal dramatic importance as the factually arrived at situations they are in and not at the

expense of watering down either of these factors. (Documentary situation obviously is not based on case file material alone. It achieves stature whenever it is well-researched as in *The Lost Weekend*.) In the effort at synthesis I had to, of necessity, treat the dramatic situation as constant (meaning that while it was subject to and required imagination, it was not subject to distortion. The United States Department of Treasury saw to that!) This made documentary characterization variable, subject to test, re-test, work, re-work until the human values felt as sound, believable, exciting and factual as the constant situational values.

### 3

The various artists who made *The Best Years of Our Lives* voluntarily assumed a kindred problem and solved it with remarkable success. William Wyler makes reference to it in his important article in the February issue of THE SCREEN WRITER when he says: "In the case of *The Best Years*, I should like to make the point that the picture came out of its period as a result of the social forces when the war ended. *In a sense the picture was made by events and imposed a responsibility upon us to be true to these events and refrain from distorting them for our own ends.*" (My underscoring.) Elsewhere in this same article Mr. Wyler observes: "It is readily apparent that *The Best Years* is not a story of plot, but a story of some people facing real problems." The fact that *Assigned to Treasury* is a story of plot, real, factual plot, documentarily unfolded, by itself confronted us with some interesting riddles. Whether solved or not, of course still remains to be seen.

If characterization was to be attempted at all, it required that the "human document" be as real as the "situational document" — that it never be forced and always remain consistent with the terms imposed by the plot and the understated, authentic style demanded by the "fact-drama" method of story telling. Among other solutions, in the middle section of *Assigned to Treasury* the girl is totally absent. She is kept alive in the story only by her bearing on it. In addition, in this same section, Mike Barrows (Dick Powell) is placed in the hands of his colleagues in Beirut and in Egypt. *They*, not *he*, are the protagonists.

Another by-product of this approach which starts with thematic viewpoint — is that it commits mayhem on a host of theatrical values bred by chauvinism. The narcotics operatives of the various nations of the world involved in our story are all men of stature. That is the truth in the file. Creating these new authentically conceived archetypes, with their own specific personality coloration was a willing labor. I think it is better to allow Gunga Din to achieve his dignity than to weep



## THE SCREEN WRITER

for his lack of it. The moon-faced, greasy South American, the Vodka-swilling Russian, the bowing, "chop-chop" Chinese are figments of a prejudiced, undemocratic imagination. It is only justice that audiences composed of these people and self-respecting audiences generally throughout the postwar world should, in a competitive film market, reject any American film that perpetuates this slander.

Obviously, eliminating these "well-established" forms of domestic boxoffice insurance necessitated further research into character rather than caricature. Finding the theatrical expression of the true national characteristics of these people yielded the reward of foreign characters who are not "alien." While valid and entertaining, they are understandable and worthy of the high regard to which the peoples they represent in life are entitled.

The character who best illustrates the point I am trying to make regarding the raising of the *human* document to the same level as the *situational* document is Homer, the boy without hands in *The Best Years*. The documentary development of *how* Homer uses his artificial hands could have met the strictest requirements of wartime documentary technique. This was a carefully researched statement of "know-how" in using artificial hands. But in a story "of some people facing real problems" it would have been a terrible blunder to make the issue of *how* Homer uses his hands more important than *why* he has to. Hence, it was necessary to deepen the character of Homer. We learn *how* and *why* simultaneously, without distorting either one to suit the dramatic needs of the other. As a result we are emotionally bound up with the larger issue of men like Homer who fought for something they are entitled to and the assistance as well as the courage they must have in order to secure it. I believe that is why Homer proves the theme of *The Best Years* better than his two buddies, with or without artificial hands. Because a true balance was struck between *who* he was (documentary characterization) and *what* he faced (authentic situation) he stands out as something new in picture making.

### 4

The effectiveness of *The Best Years* remains at this writing the strongest evidence to support my conviction that *integrating the prewar Hollywood technique with the war-time so-called documentary technique is the problem of serious minded picture makers today*. It parallels the nation's postwar social problem of integrating the best elements of our prewar life with the experiences the GI and all of us had during the war. In my own case, being steeped so deeply in the case file mate-

rial, I was able to contribute a kind of resistance to its distortion, while being flexible as to its use.

The effort to integrate a full authentic plot story and a full human story created certain problems in exposition and recapitulation, which are no doubt "old stuff" to the reader who has written screenplays before. To me they were in the nature of new lessons. The size of the problem came with the "discovery" that a film is in constant motion, whereas the stageplay, the radio show and the novel on the other hand, have their intermissions. In the play, in the radio show, they are imposed. In the novel, the reader decides the intermission when he sets down the book to reflect on what he has read before picking it up again. Obviously, the so-called "interruptions" in the theatre, radio show and novel put the audience's and reader's mind to imaginative work (even if only partially). The film, conversely, by virtue of its uninterruptedness can quickly create mental fatigue (all the more so if considerable data either story wise or character wise has been unfolded) unless recapitulation is forthcoming to make up for the absence of these intermissions. This, in turn, could not be done at the expense of "stopping the story." In a tale as full as *Assigned to Treasury* is, both in plot and character data, the solution came from placing recapitulation (which invariably pertained to situation, plot action, story development) at the service of discovering something new about *people*.

In the first section, recapitulation comes from the Chinese operative at a time that we discover underneath his calm and seemingly professionally indifferent attitude an intense, burning hatred for those Japanese who are attempting to subjugate his people with narcotics. The disclosure of his hatred is specific, rather than general, and therefore is new.

In the second section, recapitulation comes from the Egyptian operative, in a scene in which we learn the reasons why he does his work (it is international in scope and coming as he does from a minority people he strives for a better understanding between peoples which would yield more equality for his own people, etc.) In the last section, it comes at the moment when our protagonist, Mike Barrows, comes fully of age and now gives leadership to the Cuban operative and then to his North American associates, much in the manner in which he has heretofore taken leadership from the Chinese, Egyptian, British and French operatives. Thus, the very agent which created a complicated story-telling problem also provided the key to simplifying the telling of the story.

Whether agreed with, or not, I sincerely hope that this recital of a struggle with technique may be of some interest to those directly connected with the creative and policy-making side of production. But since this struggle was undertaken essentially in my capacity as a writer, its most direct bearing on the industry stems from its bearing on writers. Theirs is the first task in achieving this kind of integration of prewar and war-time techniques. If they are to do it at all (or, for that matter, contribute substantially to the maturing of picture making in any other ways at the present time), I believe that their current status must undergo changes in certain important respects. Only then will the industry fully profit from their efforts. In the first place, it would seem necessary that the writer be permitted sufficient time to write a story properly. After that, I believe he should be accorded the privilege of following through on every *screenplay he writes, from rough draft on paper to the finished film on screen and he should do so with some right of participation in production decisions.*

The common practice of taking the screenwriter's script, assigning him to a new one, then turning the pages over to another author (most of the time without so much as even a conference between the first and second author), then turning the finished script into film without either author's collaboration, without their privilege of opinion or authority to exercise it, seems to a newcomer's eyes the most outrageous dichotomy of an author's relationship to his own work. From it, not only the writer suffers. So do the producer, the director, the cameraman, the set designer, the set dresser, the film editor, publicity and advertising departments, the studio owner, the bank which participates in financing the film, the exhibitors, and last, and most important, the public.

## 5

It seems incredible that the writer whose story is the subject of the entire project of production should have the smallest and least important voice in production decisions. I am grateful for what my initial picture production experience has been and to both Sidney Buchman and the distributor of our film for making it possible. I believe that all writers must be accorded a similar opportunity in their own interests as well as in the interests of the industry. It is costly bureaucracy indeed which prevents genuine rapport between the writer and the actors. Surely if the "playing attitude" of an actor derives from anything, it must, in the first place derive from the interpretation of the lines and situations conceived by the writer.

Obviously, a director who has not spent the same

amount of time on the story which the writer has (which is most often the case and once again I am not discussing the exception) cannot unearth all the intended meanings. The director or producer who denies the validity of this argument inevitably demonstrates the deficiency in his outlook in the final irrefutable evidence of the finished picture itself. There is a whole part of a sincere writer's experience which he never puts on paper in the screenplay. This remaining part in his head and in his nervous system can be contributed only during actual production. It is judgment based on the experience of having written the story. There is mood creation and set design which can be destroyed by over-stylized, low-key lighting or conventional lighting to glamorize the star. There are currents and cross-currents of meaning which can be completely disrupted by an insufficiently digested approach to such mechanical (though important) questions as brevity or length.

## 6

One may argue that a writer's work is no better than the producer or director he associates himself with. Absolutely true. Particularly true in my case with a producer as skilled, talented and experienced as Sidney Buchman. But where, in general industry practice is the writer's privilege of choice in this matter? One may likewise argue that in the collaborative work of picture making, problems such as those indicated above are properly the domain of the producer, director, cameraman and film editor. This argument likewise is not satisfying. It is a platitude to say that the head of every department has his own specialized, valid, individual contribution to make. Obviously. Likewise it is an evasive argument to proclaim that a writer of necessity loses his total objectivity concerning his material after seventeen re-writes and months of living with the story. Also true. The argument which nonetheless stands unassailable is the simple common sense fact that the writer, and no one but the writer, conceived and incubated an idea. He or she gave birth to it and raised it. He visualized scenes designed to express this idea and created characters concerning whom, it is hoped, he developed certain passions. No matter what changes may take place from paper to film, no matter what valid additions or deletions may come about as the result of "kicking the material around," no matter how many re-writes may take place, something has remained in that author as a result of this experience which, if he is still on his feet, gives him a lasting perspective regarding the scenes and characters that supplies him knowledge concerning the dramaturgical pitfalls in the story, and an instinct as to where, when or how violence can



be done to the story, characters and scene design. This is the part of his contribution which is not in the script.

The studio has paid for it and then denies itself the opportunity of benefiting from it. His right to contribute some of the judgment and knowledge born of the experience of writing the story must not depend on the common sense, intelligence, self-interest, or fair-mindedness of the studio, the producer, or the director. His right must be inherent somewhere in the terms of his employment. The playwright enjoys this status. To a more limited extent so does the novelist.

If every screen writer were given these minimum opportunities there would be less criticism by an actor of lines which look fine on paper but which he cannot speak. This process goes on into the cutting and editing of the film, from which the writer learns, as well as to which he contributes, day by day. By actual participation in daily shooting and in the subsequent study of the rushes, the writer quickly learns the limitations imposed upon him by actual film. Questions of length or brevity are realistically related to the understanding of intercutting, dissolves, total film length, audience fatigue, etc. With such experience, a writer can subsequently design his scenes conscious of problems and possibilities.

It would seem to me that this added knowledge on his part ultimately spells greater profits at the boxoffice. But denied the opportunity of participating in daily shooting and seeing the rough cut as it grows reel by reel, he remains ignorant of the final product, which is not words on paper, but people and their purposes in action on film. Seeing the picture months later in a theatre never did and never will supply this. And that, I believe, is why from one assignment to the next, the writer is told that his place is at the typewriter and that he has no right to participate in production decisions because he doesn't have the "know-how." Thus, both he and his employers are in the final analysis cheated. I reject the solution which works for individuals, but not for the writing group, such as the person who becomes a writer-producer, or a writer-director to "protect his material." I choose the path of writing-producing for a variety of reasons having to do with previous experiences in other fields.

But if a writer wishes to devote himself exclusively to writing, then, in the best interests of the industry he should not be penalized for this by being the lowliest participant in the decision-making end of producing a motion picture. Not so long as the final product rests upon the basic characters, sequences and ideas he had originally put on paper for its validity and effectiveness. It is unjust as well as unintelligent. I likewise reject the pompous judgment of the "Haves" against

the "Have-Nots" which argues that the writer, to secure these privileges of authority with regard to production, and the privilege of following through on a picture "on the company time" until the film is in the can, must go through a lengthy and bloody apprenticeship.

If his dramatic instinct and capacity to be articulate were good enough to secure him employment in the motion picture industry, then they are sufficient credentials *at that very moment* to qualify him for the *additional* training which I described above. It will make him a better writer. It will make good pictures better. It will give his employer more value for his money. I was surprised to find that this line of thinking creates wrath expressed with great certainty in some quarters. Perhaps my specific solution is not the best. But no one who has the interests of the industry as a whole at heart can deny the existence of the problem. Those who do, with such deep throated certainty are, I suspect, guilty of an unreasoning canine snarling born of dog-eat-dog competition which is harmful to the entire industry at a time when it heads into serious problems at home and abroad.

## 7

I am aware that the Screen Writers' Guild has done prodigious work on this problem and I am most certainly not criticizing the Guild for what remains to be done. I realize that achieving this improved status of *practical dignity* for the writer may well bear directly on achieving an improved economic status for him. I still think it is sound business for the industry, as well as for the writer. In addition, I know what those writers who have not been accorded some of my opportunities have been denied.

I am indebted to my many patient teachers during this apprenticeship — men who had nothing to gain for themselves by their generosity. Sidney Buchman, Bill Lyon, our film editor, his assistant, Sam Brown, our set designer, Carey O'Dell, Larry Butler, in charge of special effects, Reggie Smith, our property man, Burnett Guffey, our cameraman, Arthur Birnkrant, Seymour Friedman, our assistant director, and Irving Lerner, whose practical experiences in the documentary field taught me a great deal. I would like to see other writers share similarly enriching experiences.

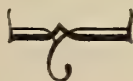
It is not enough that some studios and producers have the intelligence to realize that the director and producer must work closely with the writer. So long as this fundamental difference in authority persists, when the going gets rough and disagreements become basic, from what I have learned, the producer and director

are more often working *on* the writer, rather than *with* him and finally, if expedient, they work *around* him.

The fact that my positive experiences give me the confidence to proceed now with production plans of my own, does not mean that these experiences are the less necessary for the writer who has no such intentions.

As fifteen months go, these have been hard and long.

They have convinced me that this is where I belong. I am grateful to those who made my coming possible. A community of working artists is a good thing. It makes the individual know that he is never alone. Making this point through *Assigned to Treasury* is what brought me to Hollywood in the first place. I am glad to be here.



## World Film & Fine Arts Festival at Brussels

June 1-30 are the dates of the World Film and Fine Arts Festival to take place at Brussels. The daily program, as recently made public in its tentative form, calls for concerts or related film music by Virgil Thomson, Aaron Copeland, Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, Benjamin Britten, and others; discussions (with Eric Johnston, William Wyler, Louis de Rochemont, Ingrid Bergman and others participating); and daily film showings from June 8 to June 27.

The U. S. industry will, as can be seen by the above, be much more adequately represented than it was last year at Cannes. But a look at the program appears to reveal that screen writers, as such, receive, if possible, even less attention than they did there.

Following excursions on June 28-29 to Liège, Spa and that landmark of recent vintage, Bastogne, there will be awards of prizes and closing ceremonies on June 30.

Eleven countries had, at this writing, signified their intention of showing films at Brussels. Their entries, as announced so far, are:

U. S.: *Down to Earth, Song of the South, The Yearling, To Each His Own, It's a Wonderful Life, The Razor's Edge, The Best Years of Our Lives, The Egg and I, Humoresque*, and one entry from United Artists and one from an independent producer;

Great Britain: *The Courtneys of Curzon Street*, plus five entries from the British Film Producers' Association;

France: *Le Diable au corps, Le silence est d'or* (Golden Silence), *Le Bataillon du ciel*;

Poland: *The Dragon of Wavel Castle, Parvel and Farvel, Land of Lubusza, Black Gold, Victory Parade* (all shorts);

Switzerland: *The Reign of Matto, Citizen and Peasant*;

Argentina: *Life of Albeniz, Kreutzer Sonata*;

Belgium: *Mr. Wens' Trumps, The Pilgrim to Hell*;

Italy, Czechoslovakia, Mexico, Greece: Titles to be announced.



# Other End of the Rainbow

SUMNER LYON

SUMNER LYON is a member of SWG, now living in New York where he has been specializing in the field of educational and commercial films.

IN 1945, Col. Darryl Zanuck discovered Manhattan, and invaded. Units of other companies followed. The island was taken. . . . Mission accomplished. Headquarters: *The House on 92nd Street*.

Victory secure, the motion picture fortress this year moved into 106th St. Even the Wall Street Journal acknowledged the invaders' success when it announced that Pathe's Park Avenue studio is "equipped to turn out a complete feature picture . . . is the nation's only vertical studio. . . . As many as three units can work simultaneously."

But some people are beginning to wonder what's going to happen to the natives. Are they to be despoiled; or might they perhaps participate in the fruits of success?

What natives? Why, those who for years have been making motion pictures in the East. And, for your information, there is a tribe called "writers" among them.

This tribe has been busy in an industry which produces what is called the short subject. Its archeology is somewhat unfamiliar because of the shadow thrown upon it by the glamour of its Hollywood progeny. Let us scrape lightly the shovel to reveal the nature of this product, and the writing headaches concomitant thereto.

Arbitrarily we shall subdivide the short subject into two general categories: theatrical, and non-theatrical. You may quarrel with this classification, for often what is produced for one is found useful by the other. And often the product defies classification. Broadly however, the purpose of the film — which shapes its content — and not alone its quality, determines its status in this regard.

Into the theatrical classification we shall place the newsreel, and the "entertainment" short subject; into the non-theatrical, the educational, the documentary, and the commercial.

Each of these products requires a special kind of writing; each has its intrinsic problems.

The perennial newsreel has a definite story to tell in very limited footage. The newsreel writer, of which there are about ten, scattered among the five newsreel companies, always under pressure, must frame his story to fit the film available, cram in as much information as possible, and time his narration so that it accents the film for maximum effect. No retakes or rewrites are possible. The recording is done to the negative, and the first composite goes right into a theatre.

The Eastern production of theatrical short subjects is accounted for largely by RKO Pathe's *This Is America* series, and the *March of Time*. Fiction and musical shorts, which rest more easily in the "entertainment" classification, emerge but sporadically from the East. And certainly there is nothing novel in the writing problems aroused by these.

In the non-theatrical field, such educational pictures as are made hardly deserve the category. (Let us hope that Encyclopaedia Britannica Films and Young America, Inc. may soon refute this statement.) For, were the "educational" a standard product, its creation would demand the most exacting care. The writer would be required to weigh content, language, even length of individual scenes, against the age, grade, and course of study of the given audience. The writer of the true educational picture would be a master psychologist. Since, however, visual education is still in a disorganized state, the usual classroom film is merely an adaptation of some short whose content happens to be of some interest to teachers here and there. The student audience of America has not developed a status which can demand the meticulous planning and careful production which films for its consumption deserve.

On the shoulders of the so-called documentary, then, has fallen the burden of transmitting information through the medium of the screen. And it need not be limited to non-theatrical distribution. Both *The March of Time* and the *This Is America* are documentary in style, but what they have to say is certainly tempered

by the distributor's estimate of the customers' desires. *Seeds of Destiny*, for example, which won the Academy Award for documentaries, is not being shown theatrically, through no lack of quality, but because of strong content. There are those who say every person in this country should see this film, but such a decision lies in the hands of those who control the theatres. In any event, the documentary is the film means of saying something in the manner which the writer deems most effective for his expression. To be sure, the writer of the documentary has a certain licence, but always he needs a talent for synthesis . . . that blend of picture and sound . . . the quality which Santayana would call "emergence."

But far and away the bulk of motion picture work in New York is commercial. This is also the most difficult and trying work for the writer. This is so because, in addition to the consumer — that nebulous group of persons which makes up an audience — there is a customer to please. He is the party who pays to have the picture made; he must be kept happy. In the total project of sustaining the client's account the writing and making of the commercial film may become incidental.

The writer of the commercial, or business, motion picture finds himself first, then, a trouble shooter — a diagnostician, if you please. The customer desiring the film wants it to do a given job. Whether it's selling, or selling an idea, he expects great things of a "movie," even though other media may already have failed.

So the writer's first job is to find out what the client is trying to sell. This objective may not always be clear to the customer himself. Very often he tries to make the film do too much. Once this is settled, the writer's next step is to formulate an acceptable presentation. Here, weighing the audience against the purpose of the picture, the writer must give his client the benefit of his creative experience. Like other writing, the quality of his script may be judged by what he throws into the wastebasket.

Running the gamut of approvals and technical

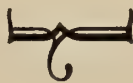
advisors is no little trick. If the writer musters the stamina and courage to fight for license and time, he has a good chance of turning out a creditable motion picture, as well as a product which meets the customer's requirements.

Often, however, the client's purpose for the picture is so specific that the result cannot fairly be judged by normal motion picture standards. The Philco picture, made last year, with a running time of six hours, is such an example. Their purpose was to take a national convention to the Philco dealers, rather than vice versa. This, in its saving of company personnel time and energy, was sound business. One can't quarrel with the motive. From the company point of view, this was a highly successful picture, even at the cost of some \$350,000. Another example is the recent order for a film to show to an executive meeting of a national organization which gave the producer exactly seven working days. The company got its picture, but without opticals; there wasn't time. Here was a film, made simply for the projection of an idea at one showing — one showing at a cost of thousands of dollars! Here is a product with an accent quite foreign to that West of San Berdoo; yet good business for both customer and producer.

Realizing the great business potential of the commercial film Pathe builds a nice, modern plant where quality pictures can be turned out, and what happens? Eastward flows the tide of Hollywood feature producing units. Selznick moves into the studio for his *Portrait of Jenny*.

The East has passed the test. Not in Fort Lee, or New Rochelle, but in the middle of Manhattan Island. So now there is talk of United Artists' building in New Jersey; and Paramount wants to get back into Astoria. Say, the prospect of commuting to the studio from that Connecticut farm is getting pretty real. And Bucks County is only an hour or so away. . . .

You don't suppose that Hollywood SWG guy is going to want to pick up a commercial show now and then between features, do you?





# Screenwriter and Director in a British Studio

T. E. B. CLARKE

*T. E. B. CLARKE is a contract writer at Ealing Studios, England. He has collaborated on six recent screenplays, including Dead of Night. He is the author of the original screenplays, Johnny Frenchman and Hue and Cry.*

THE exacting requirements of the partnership between the writer of a film and its director are clearly indicated, I think, by the number of British screenwriters who, in recent years, have taken to directing their own pictures.

Writers seldom turn themselves into directors for the sake of increased prestige or a larger income. If they are good enough, they can acquire both these rewards just as soon by means of their writing, which, as a form of work, is undoubtedly more agreeable and less wearisome. Almost every writer who becomes a director of his own films does so because he has found that in no other way can his work be brought to the screen in precise accordance with his conceptions of its future form.

In other words, he has failed to find a director with whom he can form a partnership that calls for the maximum degree of harmony, openmindedness and close understanding—and he has learned that a collaboration falling short of these requirements stands little chance of producing an artistically successful result.

This fact was not realised nearly enough in the past. All too often the director was allowed to ride roughshod over the writer; and it is significant that recognition of the need for a truer balance of collaboration between the two coincides approximately with the time when British films really began to advance in quality.

A director cannot be expected to make a good film out of a script that fails to stir any enthusiasm in him. Independent judges may consider it the best script the writer has ever turned out; that is immaterial. No matter what other people go into eulogies about his work, this will reach the screen without the essential qualities of warmth and sincerity if it does not make the same appeal to its director. It is thus very much in the writer's interest to work as closely as he can with the director from an early stage in the development of his story.

For what is the alternative? A conscientious director, not liking the script as it stands, will hand it over

to another writer for readjustment according to his own wishes, or else will tackle this job himself. How much more satisfactory for the original writer if he can be the one to effect the necessary compromise!

I am not suggesting that he should bow to the director's demands. In certain instances their discussions may result in the director coming over to his own point of view—and here again I do not mean that any act of submission is involved. It is sometimes extremely difficult, even impossible, for a writer to show in his script the precise mood or flavour that he intends the finished picture to have; and the director may have read the script without being able fully to appreciate his aims. Similarly, the director may have certain ideas about the picture he wishes to make which are different from—and possibly an improvement on—the writer's conception. By working together from the start, the two have a real opportunity to smooth out such conflicting views, and to infect each other with new enthusiasms. (Perhaps I should make it plain here that I am speaking of original stories written specifically for the screen, and not adaptations of plays or novels.)

Though I am not trying to claim for one moment that a harmonious partnership between writer and director is a recipe for assured success, but merely that absence of it must almost certainly bring failure, I think the way in which I have worked with the same director, Charles Crichton, on my last three film stories may be of some interest, if only as a testament of one screenwriter who has found a method of working which affords him personal satisfaction.

Many future misconceptions and disappointments may be avoided, I have found, by a very full discussion of the subject with the director before a line is set down on paper. The discussion having concluded with a rough agreement between us on the form the story is to take, I produce an outline, fifteen to twenty pages in length, as a basis for a fresh conference. Knowing now the sort of courses that the lives of our characters are to follow, we devote this second discussion mainly to the characters themselves.

(I should add that at each conference stage, the producer, the associate producer, and the scenario editor have their full say; but as I am dealing here only with the relations between writer and director, I am restricting myself to an account of the manner in which we two work once our aspirations have received all necessary blessings.)

The treatment comes next; about a hundred pages describing the action, continuity and characterizations as I myself now see them. Personally, I believe in writing as much dialogue as possible in the treatment rather than merely describing conversation, as I find that this can be made to help considerably in the drawing of the characters. I do not, however, spend much time on the niceties of the dialogue in my treatment; not until the scripting stage does this receive careful attention.

In spite of our previous discussions, the director, as I fully expected, feels differently from me about many points in the treatment; but we have already acquired sufficient mutual understanding for co-ordination of our views on most of these points to be reached in the discussion that follows its completion. Also, we are now beginning to know our characters well enough for new constructive suggestions to come freely from us both.

It is likely that Crichton will find that I have not yet drawn some of the characters clearly enough. For example:

"What exactly, is Roy's background?" he will ask. "What made him adopt his attitude to life? Was his father a drunkard — did his mother have so many children that she couldn't give him enough attention — was he an orphan brought up in some place where he was badly treated? I don't understand Roy."

Not a word about Roy's upbringing will be spoken in the film; Crichton is just as well aware of that as I am; but he wants to know it just the same, or he may feel a lack of confidence when he comes to bring Roy to life before the camera.

Deficiencies of this sort are remedied as much as possible in my first revision of the treatment, when I also try fresh approaches to those points still at issue. Some of these will click; some won't. The treatment is revised a second, third and fourth time, the remaining divergences of opinion being gradually ironed out until we are both satisfied that there is nothing in the story over which we will be sharply divided when we come to script it together.

That phase is not reached until I have first turned out a draft script. This involves the presentation of the accepted treatment in separate scenes with more polished dialogue. And when I say "scenes," I do not

mean "shots." I give little attention in my draft script to camera directions, except where these are necessary to emphasize moods and the importance of certain lines which must clearly be spoken in close-up.

## 2

Even if I knew six times as much as I do about the technicalities of film-making, I should consider it a waste of time and effort to attempt "breaking down" a script into camera shots on my own initiative. Though Crichton might perhaps adopt a few of my suggestions, he would be certain to alter most of those carefully listed shots to conform with his own individual style of shooting. To ask him to follow precisely shooting directions prepared by someone else — prepared, if you like, by Eisenstein himself — would be like asking Hutton to follow Bradman's style of batting instead of his own.

The draft script will probably undergo as much revision as did the treatment before we are ready to begin on the final script. It is now that we set about the "breaking down" process; we work on this together for about a month. By this time most of the creative work required from me has been applied, and my own contribution to the "breaking down" is restricted mainly to reshaping certain scenes and amending the dialogue to conform with the manner in which Crichton wishes to shoot. All major differences of opinion having been settled by now, I seldom find it hard to stomach a proposed change at this stage. Most of them are small changes and where these are concerned, the writer may as well resign himself to the certainty that the director will have his way about them on the floor, even though he may appear to submit to argument during the scripting!

Scenes of complex action involving a great deal of cross-cutting, such as a free fight, I do not attempt to write in detail. These I leave entirely to the director, having once set down a full description of the general action as I see it, with a list of suggested incidents and visual "gags," from which he may draw as he feels inclined. The director's own scripting of these scenes, incidentally, will rarely be found to correspond at all closely with what eventually reaches the screen, for only in the cutting-rooms can they be finalized.

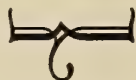
Have I given the impression that, in such a partnership as ours, the director works sufficiently on the script to deserve a writing credit? Forget it! Apart from possibly scripting one or two of those complex action scenes, he has at no time done any actual writing: certainly he is responsible for none of the dialogue. His part has been to serve as midwife to the script to which the writer has given birth, and I hold that he should



earn his directing credit as much for the thought he gives to the picture before it reaches the floor as for what he does once shooting has begun.

In any case, only the screenwriter knows how often

a director has been acclaimed by the critics for this or that clever touch which could be traced back, did they but know it, to an inspiration that emerged originally from his own typewriter!



*The Editorial Committee, having formally apologized to Mr. Joseph L. Mankiewicz for deleting material from his article, "Film Author! Film Author!" in the May, 1947 issue of THE SCREEN WRITER without first consulting him, herewith supplies the missing portions of his text. In presenting his opinion that there is an urgent need for the Hollywood screenwriter to dedicate himself to a study of his craft, Mr. Mankiewicz stated:*

"A REMARK was attributed once to a man whose political utterances at the time were unfortunately of a nature which made everything he said seem equally wrong — but he was never closer to right, unhappily, than when he branded most Hollywood screen writers as 'Mechanics.' He was wrong, of course, in one important aspect. When a mechanic shows a union card, you can be pretty sure he knows his craft. The possession of a paid up SWG card has never offered any assurance that the bearer could write a screen play. Nor, apparently, is it intended to carry the assurance that he can write anything else. At a recent meeting, a suggestion — offered with some timidity — that returning veteran screen writers write original stories and screen plays, was greeted with catcalls and hoots of derision. As if it

were ingenuous to the point of infantilism to suggest that a writer make his living by writing.

"Similarly at the same meeting, and others before and since, there could be noticed the growing manifestations of what seems to be a new SWG faith. A strange belief, comforting for many and frightening for a few, that the screen writer will advance in importance and authority not in relation to his knowledge of his particular craft and his individual skill in it, but by a series of fevered mass resolutions and statements of policy that are periodically moved, seconded, passed and carried to the morning papers. These writings may well be a joint credit for Tom Paine, John Brown and Uncle Tom; they cover all the colors of the political spectrum; they attack, defend and propound local, national and international economics on a global front; they have to do with everything under the sun but screen writing. It seems to some of us that screen writing could also become a concern of the Screen Writers' Guild."

"It would be edifying, for example, to have a public reading — before a full Guild membership lured together by some provocative political bait — of the complete list of original screen plays submitted by the American screen writer for Academy Award consideration."

# Witch-Hunting in Hollywood

GARRETT GRAHAM

*GARRETT GRAHAM, a screen writer with a long record of achievement in Hollywood, is also known for his 30 years of stalwart Republicanism and his impressive list of published volumes, the latest of which is BAN-ZAI NOEL.*

IT IS this writer's view, submitted without humility and for what little it might be worth, that it's time the Screen Writers' Guild and the Motion Picture Industry as a whole turned on their traducers.

For quite a spell Hollywood has more or less ignored sporadic Red-baiting as of no more real importance than the rantings of America Firsters who were disseminating Nazi propaganda right up to the hour of Pearl Harbor. After all, their constituencies have retired to oblivion Ham Fish, Gerald P. Nye and Burton K. Wheeler; and whoever was pulling the puppet strings on Lindbergh left him completely inarticulate by not writing any more speeches for him — a Mortimer Snerd without a Bergen.

But for nearly a year now — specifically, ever since the introduction of the initial AAA suggestion — Hollywood, and particularly the screen writers, have been the targets for an unparalleled campaign of cumulative calumny. The individuals of the Guild have been attacked either as sinister tools of Moscow, or dupes unwittingly succumbing to Communist propaganda. The latter group has not been restricted to writers. It includes such august personages as Louis B. Mayer, Jack Warner, Samuel Goldwyn, and Darryl Zanuck, who are said to have let some of the nasty stuff get by them onto the screen.

Incidentally, the evil genius who has really mastered the trick of putting something over on any or all of these smart gentlemen could make a fortune discreetly peddling his secret.

The avalanche of falsehood and misrepresentation that followed the launching of AAA was adequately dealt with in the recently published supplement of *THE SCREEN WRITER*. No one who really wants the facts about it need look further.

But a few of the highlights in this barrage of villification might be profitably reviewed. First, of course,

there was the banner line in the *Hollywood Reporter*, and a following story that a vote for AAA was a vote for Joe Stalin. This was to be expected, and naturally it caused little insomnia.

Then later came Dorothy Thompson's outburst in her syndicated column. She labelled the proposal "An Assault On Freedom" and confused this reader a little by not only injecting the Communist issue into it but also saying the scheme was a leaf right out of Dr. Goebbels' book. It is my hazy recollection that Stalin and Goebbels were not playing for the same Alma Mater. But she alarmed a lot of people because of her many readers. Miss Thompson is too good a reporter not to know she was screaming pure nonsense.

Came a rainy Sunday in December when the Columbia Broadcasting System gave time on the air to a debate about the Hollywood film strike, which had then been going on for several months. Roy Brewer spoke for the IATSE and Herbert Sorrell and John Martin for the Conference of Studio Unions.

It is beside the point that it was not a debate at all, but a bumbling reading of three prepared speeches, badly written, badly delivered, and not dealing with the same subject. There was no time given for rebuttal or surrebuttal.

What the CSU leaders said is not important because it has been said often and better by others. The burden of Mr. Brewer's address was that the sole issue of the strike was keeping Communism out of the film industry. He did not explain just how a carpenter could express his political opinions by the way he sawed a board or drove a nail; nor how a scene painter could endanger national freedom by the way he slapped his brush around.

Instead he pictured himself and his boss, Richard Walsh, President of the IATSE, as brave urchins holding their tired little fingers in the dike to keep



Hollywood from being engulfed by the Red Menace. Then he launched into the threadbare theme that the Screen Writers' Guild had been completely captured by Communists who were attempting to warp the thinking of the innocent and unprotected public by coloring what they wrote with propaganda direct from Moscow.

He also read some highly laudatory press clippings about himself and Mr. Walsh which limned the pair as honest in soul, pure in heart, high of purpose, and unselfish and noble of spirit. One of the clippings even decried the baseness of anyone who would bring up the indisputable fact that these two are the successors to and former loyal colleagues of the convicted criminals, George Browne and Willie Bioff.

The Hearst hubbub about Hollywood's Communists could hardly be regarded as a highlight. It's been going on for years, and although it's been getting even more strident of late, if that is possible, it has the public more or less immunized through sheer boredom with the same old tune. The Reporter has also continued its sharpshooting to the point of absurdity.

Then in March of this year Senator Jack B. Tenney presented to the California Legislature a report from his committee's investigation of so-called Un-American Activities, and in seeking a further appropriation to continue his witch-hunt, he named a number of prominent and reputable citizens of the Hollywood film colony as contributors of time and money to a movement to overthrow by force the government of the United States.

And, as this is written, necessarily some time before publication, a Congressional subcommittee, headed by Rep. J. Parnell Thomas, is huffing and puffing about the town allegedly gathering data on subversive activities while getting a fine spread of personal publicity in the daily papers.

Of course all this is done at the expense of the taxpayers. The junketing Congressmen and their retinue are housed at the Biltmore, eating and drinking their fill on comfortable expense accounts while also drawing their salaries. Meanwhile a former Marine of my acquaintance who returned from the Pacific with a Navy Cross, a Silver Star, and three Purple Hearts, has been living for months in a drafty garage because he can't afford to pay the bonus necessary to rent a decent apartment.

These Congressmen have been summoning busy folk to secret sessions from which nothing emerges but lurid puerilities they think will justify their visit here. If some informed, unbiased, and level-headed witness has told the investigators that they are nuts the fact

has not been revealed in the local press. Eric Johnston, who certainly is no radical and is in a position to know, has permitted himself to be quoted to the effect that there is no red menace in the film industry. Perhaps he, too, is now suspect for such a statement.

So far, Congressman Thomas and his satellites have revealed nothing that couldn't have been found out and forwarded to them by a Western Union messenger boy. If the situation is actually more complex, there are several highly competent and experienced investigators in the Los Angeles office of the FBI, any one of whom could have collected all pertinent facts at no extra cost to the government. But this, of course, would have deprived our visitors of their current fanfare and per diems.

The tactics are the same, whether it's a state legislative or a Congressional smelling out of evil. They smear people by innuendo. They rush into print with unsubstantiated charges that would get them punched in the nose if they were acting as private citizens. They hide behind the immunity from libel of their official committees.

Hearst and Wilkerson — and it's absurd to mention the latter's puny influence in connection with the former's — have a right to print whatever they please at their own expense as long as they *retain their skill* in keeping on the safe side of *obscenity* and *libel*.

But every tax-payer has a right to howl his head off at having public funds frittered away by these politicians seeking self-aggrandizement through their official witch-hunts. The money could and should be much better used doing something for the thousands of veterans in Los Angeles alone who are sleeping in garages, broken down trailers, and often in all-night theaters because they can't even find a bed.

## 2

The three principal charges hurled at the Screen Writers Guild and the film industry as a whole can be completely dealt with in three short paragraphs.

The statement that the Guild is controlled by Communists is palpably a baldfaced lie. The present officers and directors were chosen in an honest, impartially supervised election, in which more members voted than ever before. Emmet Lavery was retained as President because of the dignity and urbanity with which he has conducted Guild affairs in previous terms of office. He happens to be a Democrat and is regarded by the Catholic Church as one of its foremost laymen in America. If he is a Communist then so is the Holy Father. Mr. Lavery and the board of directors can take

no important action without a vote of the full membership. Even if they wanted to, there's no way under heaven they could influence what anyone else writes.

The second charge, that the screen is being used to spread Communist propaganda, is even more ridiculous. I pointed out in a previous issue of *THE SCREEN WRITER* that Motion Pictures are big business controlled entirely from Wall Street. There's not the remotest possibility of getting upon the screen any ideology or political point of view contrary to that of the financial titans who control the major companies and the theater chains. This is so obvious it shouldn't even have to be argued.

The third accusation, that many prominent citizens in the film industry are contributing time and money to a movement to overthrow the present government, is a clear charge of treason. Anyone having evidence to this effect, or information bearing upon it, and who does not turn it over to the Department of Justice, is equally guilty as an accomplice.

In the April 30 issue of the *Hollywood Reporter* Mr. Wilkerson printed a list of pictures "containing sizable doses of Communist propaganda." I haven't seen all of them, but I'd like to mention three.

There was *Margie*, a nostalgic tale of puppy love in the twenties, produced by Darryl Zanuck. Are you holding still for that, Darryl?

There was *The Best Years Of Our Lives*, which swept the field in the recent Academy Awards. It's too bad the handless veteran featured in this picture can't be lent a fist to answer appropriately the slur on his patriotism.

There was *Pride Of The Marines*, based upon the real life story of Al Schmid, one of the outstanding heroes of Guadalcanal. This was directed by Delmer Daves, produced by Jack Warner, with the enthusiastic approval and cooperation of the United States Marine Corps.

Al Schmid gave his eyes for his country. The United States Marines pretty well established their Americanism in the jungles of the Solomons, and on the beaches of Tarawa and Iwo Jima. What did you do, Mr. Wilkerson, or Senator Tenney, or Mr. Hearst and your stalwart sons? What did any of you risk? What did you sacrifice? Have any of you ever been within sound or sight of battle?

And Jack Warner, after producing the best war picture it was this writer's privilege to see, you are going to let such an accusation go unchallenged?

This brings us to Louis B. Mayer, probably the wealthiest, most powerful and most astute producer in

the business. Several of the writers most frequently mentioned as spear-heading the Communist movement have been under contract at MGM. Do you like the inference, Mr. Mayer, that these foul fellows have been too smart for you, and have been able to slide past you subversive propaganda that you didn't recognize but that would corrupt the Right Thinking of the general public?

It would be interesting to know the private emotions of Mr. Mayer over the published statement of actor Robert Taylor at the Congressional inquiry that he, Taylor, was forced into appearing, against his patriotic judgment, in *Song of Russia*, produced by MGM in 1943.

This film, Mr. Taylor stated, favored Russian ideologies, institutions and ways of life over the same things in our country. He said he protested to MGM that the picture was Communist propaganda, and that he was kept from joining the Navy until he completed the picture.

It was not revealed either by Mr. Taylor or Congressman Thomas how the Navy, during that trying year when the war was going pretty badly for our side, managed to get along without the handsome actor until this foul plot was consummated.

I have never been important enough in the film industry to know Mr. Mayer personally, but several of my friends who do assure me that he does not force easily. How many men did it take, I wonder, to hold Mr. Mayer while this dastardly deed was being done in his name.

Another fascinating revelation transmitted to the public from the Biltmore hearings was the gallant story of how Mrs. Leila Rogers, mother of Ginger, saved her daughter from uttering the infamous lines, "Share and share alike — that's democracy!" These lines, occurring in *Tender Comrade*, were a prime exhibit illustrating the Kremlin's grip on the film industry. I wonder how, if we ever make a definite film biography of the great Lincoln, we can record some of his utterances, such as the one in which he said that in any conflict between property rights and human rights, human rights must prevail. Or how, if the life of Christ is filmed in the future, we can use His verbal portraits of the rich exploiters and Pharisees and hired scribes of His day.

### 3

Let us turn upon our detractors the sly Socratic method of character defamation the Hollywood gossip columnists use so frequently. Questions like this: "What actor's wife (or writer, director, or producer)



would sue him for divorce if she had peeked through the bedroom window of a certain starlet the other night, when the wife thought her husband was working late at the studio?"

Get the idea? No names mentioned, no risk of libel, but, human nature being what it is, that question could cause trouble any day in a dozen homes.

Or: "Are the boys at Las Vegas paying you off properly for the ballyhoo you are giving their gilded joints in the Hollywood Reporter?"

Or: "What do you hear from the mob? How are Guy and Farmer?"

Or: "When a certain character recently became an associate producer at one of the major studios, a person whose former Sunset Strip joint you frequented and often mentioned in your trade paper why didn't you call to the attention of at least the Johnston office, the fact that this same character *used to be a member of the tight little syndicate that controlled and levied tribute on all gambling and prostitution in our fair community?*"

See how it works? *I haven't accused him of anything.* But the answers would be highly interesting.

Now let's consider Senator Tenney. I am indebted to Fortnight, the sprightly young California news magazine, for the following published background information on this legislator: "He himself was branded as a Communist before the old Dies Committee in 1938 — about the time he was thrown out as President of the Los Angeles Musicians Union.

"He was a Democrat when he was a mere Assemblyman from the Inglewood District; switched to the Republican ticket in 1944 just as he was about to be read out of the Bourbon party for supporting a rival candidate.

"Tenney's chief claim to fame is the fact that he wrote the song 'Mexicali Rose' when he led a dance band in Mexicali. He didn't cash in on the song, but will whip out and autograph a copy for anyone who professes to be the least bit interested."

Let's interrogate the Senator, and it ain't a joke, son.

"Senator Tenney, do you think that your former occupation of entertaining the highly colorful characters of Mexicali qualifies you to pass upon the patriotism and loyalty of thousands of respectable men and women employed in the motion picture industry?"

Or: "Do you think that this background really justifies further appropriations of the people's money to keep you in the public eye; or that it makes you more capable

than J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI staff in investigating any real menace to this country?"

Or: "Do you think that writing 'Mexicali Rose' — a very good song, by the way — is sufficient training for you to help write the laws of the State of California?"

I will leave it to someone else to ask similar questions of Mr. Hearst. I don't want to give away too much weight.

In the interest of public economy I will save these gentlemen the trouble of investigating my political orthodoxy. I am not a Communist, I do not believe in Communism and I'm not defending it. I've been a registered Republican for nearly thirty years. I served voluntarily in both World Wars. I served without distinction, it's true, but with some small personal risk, and great inconvenience. Can any of these witch-hunters make that statement?

#### 4

The most dismaying thing about the attacks on the Screen Writers' Guild and the efforts to establish the AAA is that two of the most skilled and influential members of our craft, who should be staunchly with us, are on the other side. I refer to Louis Bromfield and Rupert Hughes. They have not only achieved great literary fame but have become wealthy doing it. Why should they scoff at their less gifted fellows who also would like to own a model farm in the Middle West or a mansion on Los Feliz Boulevard?

The only personal intimacy I have ever had with Mr. Bromfield was some years ago, when he was writing in Hollywood, we used to patronize the same barber. While we never spoke, I occasionally was privileged to enjoy the warmth of the chair just vacated by the distinguished Bromfield buttocks.

But I've known and admired Uncle Rupert for many years, and I call him Uncle Rupert with all possible respect and affection. I personally know that he has given with prodigal generosity the benefits of his long experience and his wizardry with words to many a struggling beginner. I, myself, have been a beneficiary of his kindness and a guest in his home. I'm certain that no one needing help of any kind has ever been turned from his door.

Then why, when he has done so much for so many individuals, does he turn against the members of his craft when they seek as a body to improve their status in the profession that has rewarded him so richly? I am seriously and respectfully asking why, Uncle Rupert.

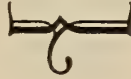
Why doesn't he turn his keen mind and flashing wit against the Tenneys — against all the political monte-

banks and charlatans who preach bigotry and racial and religious intolerance?

Uncle Rupert is smart enough to know, and if he doesn't know he could easily find out, that there's about as much chance of the Communists overturning the government of the United States as there is of me dethroning Joe Louis. He should know that most of the things he has been saying about the Screen Writers'

Guild and the proposed American Authors Authority are sheer poppycock.

We need your weight on our side, Uncle Rupert; we need your thunder to help answer some of our more powerful detractors. Of course, we couldn't ask you to stoop to a controversy with the Hollywood Reporter. After all, one doesn't call on the heavy artillery to shoot rabbits.



*Following a series of public utterances, the irresponsibility of which was challenged by Samuel Goldwyn and other leaders of the industry, Ronald Reagan, president of the Screen Actors Guild was quoted recently by the trade press in a reference to the Screen Writers' Guild. Under the date of May 7, Emmet Lavery, president of the SWG, wrote Mr. Reagan inquiring about the item in the trade press in which he was quoted as saying that "there were some Communists in the SAG and in the Screen Writers Guild, probably more in the latter than in the actors' group." Mr. Lavery went on to say:*

*I am very much interested in an item printed in the Hollywood Reporter yesterday in which you are quoted as saying that "there were some Communists in the SAG and in the Screen Writers Guild, probably more in the latter than in the actors' group."*

*If this report of your speech is correct, on what basis do you presume to offer the public the gratuitous information that there are "probably more" in the Screen Writers' Guild than in the SAG?*

*At a time when inter-Guild unity is of increasing importance, it is a little difficult for us in the Screen Writers' Guild to understand why the president of a neighboring guild should go out of his way to make this particular type of criticism.*

*My own private guess would have been that you have many more Communists in the SAG than we have in the SWG, but I certainly would not, in the first instance, have felt the inclination to grab a public platform and offer this generality as an absolute fact. Undoubtedly there are some Communists in the Screen Writers' Guild and there are some Commu-*

nists in the Screen Actors Guild. But since neither of our Guilds has a political test for membership, we have no way of screening out the few Communists, any more than we have of screening out Republicans or Democrats. And in the light of prevailing Supreme Court decisions neither of our Guilds would find very much support — especially in time of peace — for exploring the private political lives of our members.

I see nothing to be gained for either Guild in a guessing contest as to the probable number of Communists in either. The solid democratic worth of each Guild is a self-evident fact which needs no apology from anyone at this time. Now, as always in the history of our country, there is a simple remedy for seditious activity in time of peace or war. If members of any guild or union in Hollywood are truly engaged in any activities bordering on sedition, there are standard procedures in law by which these activities can be stopped.

The Screen Writers' Guild, as you must well know, has always had the friendliest regards for the Screen Actors Guild. I can only hope that you have been misquoted in the trade papers. If this is so, I would appreciate a word from you so that I may refer it to our Executive Board without delay.

Sincerely,  
s/ EMMET LAVERY  
President Screen Writers'  
Guild.

*Mr. Reagan's reply, dated May 12, follows:*

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter of May 7th. I was not only misquoted — I was smeared, and I am a trifle surprised that you should place any credence in anything the

professional red-baiting section of the press says, for if memory serves, you yourself have had some experience with the lengths to which some papers will go to justify their own peculiar policy.

My entire talk was a defense of Hollywood and about 95 per cent of it had nothing to do with Communists. I discussed from a number of facets the fact that Hollywood is just a cross-section of the country at large and that it would be unjust to judge the entire city of Des Moines by the actions of a very few individuals who might misbehave in public and land in the hoosegow.

In briefly touching on politics, I said we had all shades of opinion here in Hollywood, ranging from the Fascist-reactionary on the extreme right to the Communist Party member on the extreme left, but that the vast majority of people in the industry decried both extremes.

I ventured the opinion that the Communist Party was a bit more active here in Hollywood than in Des Moines, for propaganda purposes, and that for propaganda reasons, individual party members sought to use the Screen Actors Guild and the Screen Writers Guild. I did not say there were more Communists in the Writers Guild than in the Actors Guild. I did say that the active Communist Party member infiltrates where he can do the most for his party and for this reason, it is possible that the party has directed greater attention to the Writers Guild than to the Actors Guild — although both Guilds have a few of them.

This small portion of my talk led up to a condemnation of some previous investigation of alleged subversive influences in Hollywood, which have unfairly smeared the names of screen



personalities in order to get the headlines in the newspapers. I stated that if there was to be a fair and impartial investigation of Communism and Fascism, I and many others in the industry would be glad to cooperate — and that many of us know the names of the comparatively few Com-

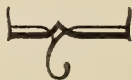
munist party members in the industry as well as the names of some persons who to all intents and purpose are Fascists.

The Screen Actors Guild has certainly enjoyed the very friendly relations which we have with the Screen Writers Guild and I hope that we do

not let intolerance and deliberate inaccuracy in some sections of the press come between us.

Sincerely,

s/ RONALD REAGAN,  
President, Screen Actors  
Guild.



## Hollywood Jabberwocky

I. A. L. DIAMOND

*'T WAS ciros, and the cinelords  
Were lollyparsing with their babes:  
All goldwyns were acadawards  
But demille ruled the nabes.*

"Beware the Jarthurank, my lad!  
The lion's claw, the eagle's wing!  
And when U-I his pix, be glad  
That DOS dos everything!"

He took his johnston code in hand:  
Long time the ranksome foe he sought —  
So rested he by the schary tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in quota-quotes he stood,  
The Jarthurank, of happy breed,  
Came boulding through the korda wood  
And caroled on his reed!

For sin! For shame! On cleavaged dame  
The censor shears went flicker-flack!  
He scarred the Bard, and coward marred  
Went gallupolling back.

"And hast thou haysed the Jarthurank?  
Come to my arms, my breenish boy!  
O date and day! Elate! L.A.!"  
He xenophobed with joy.

*'Twas ciros, and the cinelords  
Were lollyparsing with their babes:  
All goldwyns were acadawards  
But demille ruled the nabes.*

# The Screen Writer's Medium

SHERIDAN GIBNEY

SWG member SHERIDAN GIBNEY, whose article, *What Is Screenwriting?* was published in the May issue of *THE SCREEN WRITER*, this month discusses the medium in which screen writers work. Mr. Gibney is a writer-producer and chairman of the SWG Political Advisory Committee.

IN A PREVIOUS article I attempted to define screen writing, and by a process of elimination, came to the enormous conclusion that what a screen writer does is to write a motion picture—in much the same fashion as a playwright writes a play, or a composer writes an opera. In all three cases, whether or not his works are produced, succeed, or fail, the writer is the essential creator, for without his manuscript there can be no production.

But there the similarity ceases. The screen writer, employing quite different devices to achieve his effects, can borrow only sparingly from the rules and techniques of the theatre; and it is for this reason that I ventured the further opinion that writers for the screen are engaged in a new form of dramatic art.

Historically, it is not uncommon for new art forms to come into being as a result of mechanical inventions. In music, for instance, the invention of the harpsichord in the fourteenth century, combining the keyboard of the pipe organ with the strings of the harp, made possible and inevitable the development of many new forms of musical composition. But the invention of the motion picture camera has had a far more revolutionary effect upon the art of the dramatist than the mere addition of a new instrument could possibly bring about.

The origin of western drama is commonly attributed to a Greek named Thespis in the sixth century B. C., who conceived the idea of having an "actor" discourse with the leader of the chorus in the Dionysian festivals—a radical departure in religious ritual which enabled Greek tragedy to develop. Aeschylus added a second actor and Sophocles a third; and from that day to this, a matter of twenty five hundred years, the medium for drama underwent no essential change so far as writers were concerned. Their task was set once and for all by the established convention of presenting a dramatic representation of life on a stage by means of actors and

dialogue for the enjoyment or discomfort of an audience.

The physical limitations of the stage itself were soon turned by the dramatist to his own advantage. The necessity for bringing characters logically and naturally to the scene of action; the three rules of classic unity which made a single setting possible; the arbitrary convention of keeping physical violence off the stage (where it too often appears ridiculous or implausible); are conditions by means of which the playwright demonstrates his skill. The accepted limitations of any art form are always looked upon as a challenge; and the artist, like the magician, is judged in part by his ability to conceal the methods by which he overcomes them. The technical triumph of Ibsen, for example, in devoting a large part of his dialogue to pure exposition, while appearing not to, is a case in point; and a present day playwright like Elmer Rice is able in *Street Scene* to convey an impression of reality by the use of a single set representing the windows of a tenement, a doorway, and one conveniently placed ash can. To this arbitrary place of action all the characters must logically and naturally be brought in order that the audience may view them. The success with which this feat is accomplished contributes, in large measure, to the enjoyment and interest of the spectator.

## 2

The revolutionary aspect of motion pictures, from a craft point of view, is simply that it reverses this process. By freeing the audience and putting it on a magic carpet, so to speak, the skills and techniques of construction, which playwrights have sweated over these many centuries, suddenly become useless. The writer can no longer rely upon an audience's imagination to fill in the picture for him. On the contrary, he must take his audience with him, for there is now no legitimate reason not to. The audience can ride on a carousel side



by side with the leading lady; it can accompany the leading man in a parachute jump when he bails out of a burning plane; it can peer nosily into a woman's vanity case, or read a letter over someone's shoulder; all of which are highly unorthodox activities for the age-old theatregoer to engage in.

Even to the casual observer, therefore, it must appear obvious that the physical limitations of the stage, on which dramatists have leaned so heavily, are of no use to the screen writer. An excellent illustration of this fact can be seen in the film version of *The Green Pastures*. On the stage, one of the most thrilling scenes in the play occurs when the entire company, by means of a treadmill, "marches" toward the walls of Jericho; but on the screen this action is in no way spectacular because there is no physical limitation to be overcome. What the screen shows is simply a crowd of people moving by natural means along a road.

This is only one of countless ways in which the devices of the conventional theatre are rendered ineffective by the analytical eye of the camera. But of much greater significance is what has happened to the internal structure of the play itself.

Let us assume that a modern three act play is to be adapted for the screen. The first problem the screen writer faces is what to do about the exposition in act one. Minor characters bustle in and out like busy bees, each with a honeyed drop of information absolutely essential for the spectator's ear if he is to understand the action that follows. However adroit the dramatist may have been in disguising this fact, it is all too apparent on the screen. The picture audience is soon bored with being "told" something, since there is no good reason why the thing being told shouldn't be shown. Accordingly, the screen writer seeks a way to dramatize the events and subject matter contained in the exposition. This can either be solved by opening the story at an earlier period or by the use of flashbacks. Occasionally it is found necessary to invent new situations entirely.

He then comes to the first major dramatic scene which starts the "action" or "conflict" of the play, and is dismayed to find that it is mostly "talk" and very little action; added to which it all takes place in one small room. The ability of the camera (audience) to move is thus arbitrarily restricted; and the spectator, more often than not, becomes restless and bored. To use the camera in this fashion is like playing a fine piano with one finger. The real potentialities of the instrument have not been realized; and the results, therefore, are disappointing.

This is elementary to screen writers and is only

stated here to illustrate how completely the careful plotting of act one breaks down. But when the screen writer tackles the second act, an even graver problem confronts him. He views with increasing alarm the fact that acts one and two are building to a big "climax" on which the curtain will be lowered for an eight minute intermission. He calculates roughly that this will occur in about reel six with three more reels to go. Feverishly he examines act three to see if the "action" continues to build; but more often than not there is a falling off to the conventional denouement or resolution. Again this entails explanations, which, if they fall at the beginning of a picture, are ten times worse at the end.

### 3

Thus the entire architecture of the play defeats the effective use of the camera. The screen writer, with no artificial limitations to overcome, is faced with the difficult task of making the most of his freedom. Since everything can be "shown," he has to appear to show everything, which, of course, is not what he is doing at all. He is actually engaged in making a painstaking selection of scenes, characters, and background, from the almost limitless possibilities at his command. The rules by which he makes this selection are peculiar to the screen and are being formulated by the simple method of trial and error (what is effective and what isn't); and many of them have already been discovered.

Certainly, the basic form is pretty well established. The screen writer must present a continuous action, sustained through many scenes to a final climax — at which point the picture ends. In this respect the "form" is closer to the Shakespearian drama than to the modern three act play. The writer is presenting a series of tiny little scenes designed to have a cumulative effect. But his story must not be told as a narrative. It must contain all the elements of drama without the aid of theatrical devices, as I have pointed out before. It might be said that he is writing a long one act play in two or three hundred scenes. But the greater freedom he enjoys entails a greater responsibility to his subject matter. The slightest irrelevancy becomes a glaring flaw and is soon snipped out in the cutting room.

The selection of scenes, therefore, and their continuity, are matters far less flexible than is commonly supposed. They are dictated by the inherent demands of the story; and the ability of the writer to recognize these demands depends entirely upon his dramatic talent and the skill with which he can use it. Regardless of cast or director, a "good" picture — like a "good" play — is one that is fully conceived and ably written. A "bad" picture is one that isn't.



# One Way

Dear Editor: It seems  
some friends from  
the east are  
arriving,  
and so ...

# of Doing It—By Milt Gross







## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT, EMMET LAVERY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, MARY McCALL, JR.; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, HOWARD ESTABROOK; 3RD VICE-PRESIDENT, HUGO BUTLER; SECRETARY, F. HUGH HERBERT; TREASURER, HAROLD BUCHMAN. EXECUTIVE BOARD: MELVILLE BAKER, HAROLD BUCHMAN, HUGO BUTLER, JAMES M. CAIN, LESTER COLE, PHILIP DUNNE, HOWARD ESTABROOK, F. HUGH HERBERT, TALBOT JENNINGS, RING LARDNER, JR., RANALD MacDOUGALL, MARY McCALL, JR., GEORGE SEATON, LEO TOWNSEND. ALTERNATES: MAURICE RAPF, GORDON KAHN, ISOBEL LENNART, VALENTINE DAVIES, HENRY MYERS, DAVID HERTZ. COUNSEL, MORRIS E. COHN. ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALICE PENNEMAN.

## E D I T O R I A L

THIS issue of The Screen Writer begins the third year of the magazine's publication. The format is new; the policies and objectives remain unchanged.

In the June, 1945, first issue of The Screen Writer this editorial statement was made:

*This magazine can develop in either of two directions. It can become the personal organ of a small clique consisting of the particular Guild members whom the Executive Board happened to appoint as its editorial staff. If that happens, it will only be a question of time until it withers and dies an unlamented death. Or it can become the actual voice of the Screen Writers' Guild, in which case it will assume an ever-increasing stature, not only in Hollywood but among people with a serious interest in motion pictures all over the world.*

Our magazine has not withered and died. Undoubtedly errors of judgment have been made, since the editors are humanly fallible and not professionals in the editing and publishing business. In spite of editorial shortcomings The Screen Writer has grown. It continues to grow in prestige and value. We believe it has become truly the voice of the Screen Writers' Guild. We believe it is assuming an ever-increasing stature in the motion picture industry and among people all over the world who know the actual and potential importance of

motion pictures and who understand that the optic nerve is the shortcut to the brain.

These beliefs are buttressed by the results of the recent questionnaire sent by the Editorial Committee to all readers of *The Screen Writer*.

A tabulated analysis of these results and a commentary on them will be found on page 29 of this issue. We consider it pertinent to call attention here to the answer of SWG members to this question:

"Is the magazine succeeding or failing in its objective to provide the SWG and the motion picture industry with an adult, constructive public relations medium emphasizing the contribution of writers and their creative aims to the screen art?" Out of 420 Guild members who answered that question, 380 replied that the magazine was succeeding in that objective, and 40 replied that it was falling short.

Another indication of interest in and support for the magazine on the part of SWG members: In answer to the question, "As a contribution to the Guild and its magazine would you be willing to accept assignments to do articles?" 390 replies were received; 364 said yes, 26 said no.

Replies from non-member readers—educators, editors, drama and film critics and writers in other fields—concerning the success and value of the magazine have been so almost uniformly appreciative that the Editorial Committee read them with a mixed glow of gratitude and embarrassment.

In the June, 1946, issue when *The Screen Writer* began its second year of publication, this editorial statement appeared:

*The first objective of the magazine—that of providing a vehicle of free expression—has been a difficult one to define. Certain articles have been rejected precisely because of the ideas they expressed. In framing a policy for such rejections, the Editorial Committee has concluded that an article which assumes a basic anti-Guild position has no place in a Guild publication. Since the outside market for anti-Guild and anti-labor pieces is extremely wide and profitable, it was felt that no invasion of the right of free expression was involved in such rejections.*

*The second objective of the magazine—that of achieving recognition for screen writers and their craft—has, in the main, been achieved. Screen Writer articles have served as the basis for full columns in metropolitan newspapers. The magazine has been widely quoted. It has received general commendation. We are still far from the final goal, but we have progressed.*

With this beginning of the third year of publication, further progress has been made in terms of circulation and recognition. We hope progress has also been made in terms of service to the Guild, to the profession of writing and to the motion picture industry. Final goals must remain far away and dim. But immediate goals have come closer. They have grown more sharply defined. They have been clarified by the generous response to the questionnaire. The

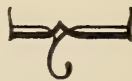


goal of achieving real stature in Hollywood and in the world of motion pictures seems far less remote.

In its new format *The Screen Writer* will stick to its old and original role of being the militant organ of the Screen Writers' Guild, an alert spokesman for the profession of writing. We are proud that in the past year this magazine was the vehicle for presenting the American Authors' Authority proposal to the world through the medium of many articles and a special supplement. Support for the AAA will be continued vigorously.

Insofar as it is within our resources to do it, the quality of the magazine will be improved and its range and usefulness extended. It has been made plain that a magazine published by professional writers in the motion picture industry has something of interest to say to other members of the industry, to other writers, to persons of awareness and intelligence throughout the world.

The high goals envisaged for *The Screen Writer* and the Screen Writers' Guild by so many friends who responded to our questionnaire create a sense of deepening responsibility. What are these goals? Greater leadership by its articulate and primarily creative members, the writers, in an industry that speaks to the world in the international language of pictures. A better understanding of the technique and art of pictures, and the creation of pictures that will help all people understand better that what they have in common is more important than the differences between them. Rewards and recognition for writers commensurate with their contributions. A more mature and critical interpretation of the art of the motion picture. These are important goals. It will take all the unity and intelligence our friends attribute to the SWG if we even begin to achieve them.



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(May 6, 1947)

Columbia — Mel Levy; alternate, Hal Smith

MGM — Gladys Lehman; alternates, Sidney Boehm, Marvin Borowsky, Anne Chapin, Margaret Fitts, Charles Kaufman.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox — Wanda Tuchock; alternate, Richard Murphy

Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International — Silvia Richards

RKO — Daniel Mainwaring; alternate, Bess Taffel.

# Report on The Screen Writer Questionnaire

RECENTLY the Editorial Committee of The Screen Writer sent to the full subscription list a questionnaire designed primarily to register opinions and preferences of readers, and to guide the Committee and the SWG Executive Board in the conduct of this

magazine. In the belief that the results of this questionnaire also will be of interest to readers, this report is presented.

Following is a tabulated summary:

Questionnaires returned by SWG members.....	450
Questionnaires returned by non-members.....	260

## PREFERENCE IN TYPES OF ARTICLES

	SWG Members	Non-Members
Craft articles on film writing .....	360	222
Special articles on rights and economic problems of writers.....	346	176
General articles dealing with motion pictures.....	334	180
Critical surveys of motion picture product.....	308	216
Articles on censorship.....	298	178
Articles on film problems and development abroad.....	290	174
Personal experience articles.....	276	148
Articles on stake of writers in political action.....	252	118
Critiques of criticism and its approaches.....	250	148
Historical articles on the development of screen techniques and writing.....	248	174
Personality profiles.....	176	96

## OPINION ON FORMAT AND TYPOGRAPHY

In favor of or agreeable to change to a larger and more flexible format.....	270	96
Keep old format.....	165	188

## SHOULD THE MAGAZINE PUBLISH FICTION?

Yes .....	66	30
No .....	342	234

## MORE FREQUENT USE OF VERSE

Yes .....	80	48
No .....	304	204

## MORE HUMOR AND LIGHT ARTICLES

Yes .....	188	100
No .....	200	160

## HAS MAGAZINE BEEN TOO MUCH RESTRICTED AS SWG HOUSE ORGAN?

Yes .....	80	195
No .....	322	48



*IF RANGE AND APPEAL WERE BROADENED  
WOULD MAGAZINE'S VALUE TO SWG AND  
MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY GAIN OR LOSE?*

Gain .....	120	170
Lose .....	282	63

*SHOULD BOOK REVIEWS OF A  
MONTHLY CHECK LIST OF BOOKS  
BE ADDED TO THE MAGAZINE?*

Yes .....	268	176
No .....	132	88

(A majority of yes answers specified that book reviews and listings should be restricted to those of special interest to writers and industry.)

(Following Questions Sent Only to SWG Members)

*IS MAGAZINE SUCCEEDING IN OR FALLING  
SHORT OF ITS OBJECTIVE TO PROVIDE THE  
SWG AND THE MOTION PICTURE INDUS-  
TRY WITH AN ADULT, CONSTRUCTIVE  
PUBLIC RELATIONS MEDIUM EMPHASIZING  
CONTRIBUTION OF WRITERS AND THEIR  
CREATIVE AIMS IN THE SCREEN ART?*

Succeeding .....	380
Falling Short .....	40

*AS A CONTRIBUTION TO THE GUILD AND  
ITS MAGAZINE, WOULD YOU BE WILLING  
TO ACCEPT AN OCCASIONAL ASSIGNMENT  
TO DO AN ARTICLE?*

Yes .....	364
No .....	26

Much interesting comment accompanied the questionnaire returns. There were a great many specific and general suggestions for future articles. Main currents of reader interest showed up clearly.

As indicated in the tabulated summary under the subhead *Preference in Types of Articles*, a very heavy demand was evident for more craft articles, for analysis and detailed discussion of the actual problems encountered in writing, directing and producing motion pictures, and for a more integrated consideration of the craft relationships existing between writers and the other creative levels of the industry. There was a frequently recurring request for the publication of screenplay scripts or portions of them illustrating techniques.

The Editorial Committee has not been unaware of this demand. Since the inception of the magazine an

effort has been made to meet it. The recent articles by William Wyler and Rouben Mamoulian, the current series by Sheridan Gibney, the article in this issue by the writer-producer, Jay Richard Kennedy, all represent the recognition of this need. However, the awareness of the Editorial Committee concerning the importance of craft articles has been sharpened by the impact of the questionnaire replies.

But it may be well to point out again that THE SCREEN WRITER is not one of the how-to-learn-to-write-successfully-in-ten-easy-lessons magazines. It must leave that to the correspondence schools and their publications, and to the school of experience.

As for publishing scripts of produced screenplays or portions of them here, this has been done once or twice in the past, and several attempts have been made to continue doing it. But serious difficulties have been

met in securing studio front office permission to reprint these scripts as the writers wrote them. The Committee will give renewed attention to this question.

Another sharply defined main current of reader interest showing up in the questionnaire returns is the matter of markets. The demand for marketing information was almost as insistent as the concern with craft discussions. There were many requests for frequent analyses of story trends, and for articles by studio story editors presenting their needs. The Committee has not been unmindful of the interest in such material, and of its importance. The question has been discussed by the present and preceding editors. One of the hazards involved is the highly competitive story market in Hollywood and the doubt that story editors would be free to discuss with complete frankness their story needs. Fear has been expressed that any lack of full, authentic information might be the derailing switch shunting too many writers to the sidetrack of speculative writing. However, the Committee will re-examine this problem in the light of the questionnaire returns.

Another prevalent request was for regular publication of motion picture reviews and criticisms. But many members remain unconvinced that in a magazine published by screen writers it would be wise policy to open the pages to critical review of pictures which represent the work of SWG members. Film criticism on a high professional level can be found in the *Hollywood Quarterly*. In THE SCREEN WRITER the editors believe there should be ample space for general critical surveys of the motion picture product, and for discussion of the technical problems involved in the writing of specific pictures. But they would prefer to leave the matter of film reviewing to general membership directive, hoping at the same time that the magazine will provide the nation's film critics with a better understanding of the writers' contribution to pictures and with a more informed basis for a fair, intelligent approach to criticism.

## 2

Acute interest was expressed in the economic and employment problems of writers. Extensive comments were made in praise of the Screen Writers' Guild fight for the American Authors' Authority plan. Scores of suggestions were made for more articles dealing with the problems of young writers. These came not only from the younger writers, but from many old Hollywood hands who apparently have a sense of responsibility toward the younger writers and toward the future of screen writing. It was clearly evident that a great deal of emphasis is desired on the question of writers' rights, on employment and on the economic trends within the motion picture industry.

Another regularly recurring suggestion was for more articles on censorship, the production code, and the use of films devoted to "pure entertainment" for presenting a misleading and immature picture of American life.

Interesting to the Editorial Committee was the response to the question concerning format. As indicated in the tabulation, among SWG members there was a majority in favor of, or agreeable to a change

to a larger and more flexible size. Among non-members the majority opinion was in favor of retaining the original small size. A general comment, however, was that content, not size or typography, was the important thing. There were a few rather violent objections to the inclusion of advertising, and a great many more opinions favoring the limited use of advertising to help SWG meet the expenses of the magazine. People with publishing experience were almost unanimously in favor of changing to a larger, more standard size. There were a great many complaints about the unshaded type hitherto used.

In the questionnaire space left open for criticisms and suggestions there were hundreds of comments. Most of them were constructive, helpful, filled with praise for the magazine, and the Editorial Committee hereby expresses its gratitude for them. But the Committee is also grateful for the criticism, some of which was frank and barbed. It read with special interest and attention the 40 negative answers to the question of whether or not the magazine is succeeding in its objective to provide the SWG and the motion picture industry with an adult, useful public relations medium emphasizing the contribution of writers and their creative aims in the screen art.

## 3

These negative answers concerning the success of the magazine were largely qualified by statements that it had only partially achieved its objectives; that it had failed to be sufficiently interesting and broad in its appeal; that it had failed to print illustrations mandatory in a magazine devoted to a visual medium; that it was too much or too little of a house organ; that it had published too many personal political attacks, and griped too much about the economic problems of writers. Here are some of the more critical comments from SWG members:

*"It makes screen writers seem like a gang of chisellers more interested in their economic gains and political rights than in the artistic development of their craft."*

*"Too partisan; keep it out of union politics."*

*"Too obviously a public relations medium. If it were a better trade organ—a better magazine—it would naturally become a public relations medium but would not be so readily recognized as such."*

*"Too much concentration on SWG problems."*

*"It is too limited in its scope."*

*"We sound like a bunch of disgruntled adolescents with chips on our shoulders, and most of the time not our own chips."*

*"It has a general air of waspishness reminiscent of spinsters who couldn't get raped. Too much flimsy stuff by people who won't take the trouble to put body into their work. . . . A political attitude which may be right or wrong, but is pre-determined. Cut out the anonymous editorials. You are trustees, not owners."*

*"Too often used to fry personal fish."*

*"Too much space given to political indignation, too*



heavy-handed satire directed at management . . . and too little to the writing and making of motion pictures."

"Before changing the format, we should change the editorial board."

"Magazine should be more like Authors' League Bulletin."

"Magazine has little influence in Hollywood. This influence is prerequisite to influence elsewhere."

"Magazine fluctuates between fawning on producers and being belligerent toward them."

"For more humor, just publish minutes of our meetings."

"Fewer words from on high advising the lowly on matters personal, political, biological and colonic. Eighty per cent of material published is highly valuable. Why don't you make it 100 per cent?"

"The editorial committee is just a bunch of reds. They should resign."

### 4

SWG membership comments in praise of the magazine outnumbered by about 10 to 1 the doubtful and caustic comments. Here are a few quotes from questionnaires returned by Guild members:

"A helluva swell magazine. Who's complaining?"

"The only thing wrong with *The Screen Writer* is that there isn't more of it."

"The best written professional magazine in the world."

"Congratulations to the editorial committee for a really swell job." (This was repeated many times.)

"The one really good magazine about the motion picture medium."

"Magazine has lived up to its best prospects."

"The *Screen Writer* has been the greatest of all boons to creative workers in the industry. It has now outlived its rather restricted house-organ character. It can be, potentially, a boon to the nation."

"A good magazine. . . . Keep it strictly house-organ. Don't louse it up with any fancy-pants or corny stuff."

"It's a great publication, inherently so — as well as splendid showcase for SWG and the industry as a whole. But I hate to see the format changed."

"Sure, change the format. Content is the important thing — and the content is GREAT."

"By all means let's have advertising. That seems to me the next logical step in the development of a great magazine. Any self-respecting publication should be able to support itself."

"A fine magazine . . . but avoid advertising, the most corrupting of all influences."

"Our magazine has done more than anything else to attract attention to the writer's role in motion pictures. Committee has done a wonderful job. It's the most constructive move SWG ever made."

"The *Screen Writer* is the most exciting trade magazine I ever read."

"Give us more of the same."

"Thanks for a wonderful job. That article by Willie Wyler was worth the price of the magazine for the next 10 years."

"Magazine can serve as forum for whole motion picture industry. It can and should be the sounding board for all phases of picture making."

"The magazine is entirely absorbing. I have no negative criticism."

"It's so good that tens of thousands of people in and out of the industry should be getting it. We should put them on the free list."

"The *Screen Writer* deserves to become the world's leading magazine on all screen matters."

"I am grateful to the editorial committee and the executive board for their excellent job of furthering the cause of writers in particular and the position of motion pictures in general."

"I doubt if the industry knows as yet what a gold mine of good will reposes in the pages of *The Screen Writer*. It should give the magazine all sorts of help in spreading the good word throughout the world."

"Your AAA fight is great. That special supplement was a honey — a wonderful service to the profession of writing."

"Don't see how it can be improved. But if you can do it — great! My thanks to executive board, editorial committee and staff."

"Magazine suffers only because it isn't bigger. I find it extremely interesting, and always wish there were more to read."

"Magazine is swell and a great credit to the Guild."

"My copies of the magazine are read by myself, my family, my house guests, my friends, a large percentage of which are just plain old General Public. Discussion of magazine's contents are lively and interesting."

"So good it should be made more generally available to the public."

"My congratulations to the SWG editors and board for their excellent job in furthering the cause of writers in particular and motion pictures in general."

"The magazine is a superior job of editing. Don't pay too much attention to No's unless backed by specific charges. The Hollywood atmosphere is so poisonous that some writers consider it corny to say anything good about anything — except, of course, their own great scripts. The question is not do they like it, but do they read it."

"Magazine has been doing one hell of a good job."

## 5

Here are a few comments from readers outside the Guild:

*"Give us more factual articles on what's wrong with Hollywood."*

*"For my money the only publication that deals adequately with the creative aspects of motion pictures."*

*"As a director, I have liked it very much to date. . . . The very clever article on De Mille and another similar one left me wondering if this personalized attack is fair — no matter how pleasant to read."*

*"Magazine is well-balanced as it now stands, except it is too much of a house organ."*

*"Broaden the title and content to include radio. The two fields are akin."*

*"The most vital and interesting publication of its nature I have ever read. Print what YOU like, think, believe, want, etc., and let your readers take it or leave it. If it's good they'll take it — and they certainly have."*

*"I appreciate the part the screen writers play in shaping events. I am a veteran of this war, and one who would like to think that the entertainment film industry can help people all over the world understand each other a little better, so that my generation may be the last veterans."*

*"A lively and interesting journal which fills a special need."*

*"The Screen Writer has been the best craft publication I ever encountered. Exceedingly valuable, not only to writers for the screen, but to other craftsmen of the medium."*

*"The magazine should de-emphasize the pervasive war-like attitude slightly. That is, confine the writers' battle to one or two articles per issue and not have it spill over into other departments."*

*"Your magazine is valuable, but your political and economic problems of interest only to your Guild should be published outside the magazine. Why not mimeograph them for members only, and keep the magazine clear for its creative and worthwhile job of providing us with a better understanding of the motion picture industry and the contribution of the writer to it."*

*"Give more attention to world film problems, world production, world responsibilities of our industry and our writers."*

*"The magazine is a disappointment in that it contains too much complaining and cynicism. It should be professionally helpful, not flippant or sour. You are conscious of the problem, as shown by the questionnaire. But I enjoy the magazine, good or bad. It has many virtues. I hope to be a permanent subscriber."*

*"The only lack I have felt in The Screen Writer is the absence of material by actors or writers dealing*

*with the problems they face working with each other in the industry."*

*(From Ireland) "Found your S.W.G. Film Forum in April one of the best and most important contributions I have seen. American films in Europe lack taste. I hate to see an American film attempting an English story. Congratulations and thanks for the high standard of your magazine."*

## 6

Following are a few comments from questionnaires returned by many of the nation's leading drama and motion picture critics:

*"Please continue to be uniquely 'inside' and critical of the industry. That's your value, and it is a much greater value than has been adequately exploited in your circulation."*

*"Keep it sound and beneficial — the Harpers of the industry, not the True Story."*

*"So much fetid publicity tripe and fan treacle comes across this desk that when The Screen Writer arrives each month it's like a current of clean, cool air coming into a hot room. Keep it coming. A lot of us have learned a lot and gained new perspectives from it."*

*"The Screen Writer is a monthly treat. I know of no publication that does its job so expertly."*

*"I think that if the level of films is ever to be raised it must be done by closer relationship and more mutual understanding between critics and screen writers."*

*"Circulation and prestige of your magazine should be nationally increased. Make it less of a house organ."*

*"Your Guild magazine is one of the high spots of my reading program because it deals with the writing end of a business whose other angles are highly publicized."*

*"Your magazine has given me a better understanding of my job as a film reviewer, and has sharpened my sense of values in judging pictures."*

In the foregoing the Editorial Committee has tried to present a fair sampling of questionnaire comments. It regrets space is not available for hundreds of other pertinent and interesting comments. It will try to present in succeeding issues some of the longer opinions and suggestions. In the meantime the Committee wishes to thank for their cooperation all readers who sent in questionnaire replies, and to assure them their intelligent response will be of great help in editing THE SCREEN WRITER.

GORDON KAHN, Editor,  
for the Screen Writer  
Editorial Committee.



# Can Screen Writers Become Film Authors?

## *A Few Comments and Suggestions Concerning This Transition*

*In the May issue of THE SCREEN WRITER Joseph L. Mankiewicz advised screen writers to become film authors. In response to a request from the Editorial Committee, several writers, directors and producers present a few ideas about how genuine film authorship may be achieved.*

### PHILIP DUNNE:

MY distinguished colleague and fellow-sufferer, Joe Mankiewicz, has written a most interesting and stimulating piece for the May issue of this magazine. It is true that I found much to disagree with in his article, but a great deal more with which to agree wholeheartedly, particularly the paragraphs in which he suggests that screen writers, as a body, have tended to show more interest in holding down their jobs than in learning their trade. His argument along this line is most persuasive, but I think some of his conclusions are at fault.

For instance, it is true that American screen writers cannot be proud of their record in creating original screen plays, but I submit that this has nothing to do with trade-learning and, in fact, is far more the fault of the studios than of the writers.

Let us analyze the situation that obtains in the studios. The business men who run these factories are responsible for the investment of very large sums of money in a series of gambles — every story being a gamble which would give an inveterate horse-player stomach ulcers. It is only natural that these gentlemen prefer to risk the stockholders' cash — and their own professional necks — on horses which have already won races, that is, on established novels, serials and plays, or on biographies of characters well established in the public's mind. Having acquired a proved property, they then make assurance doubly sure by assigning to its adaptation a proved screen writer.

The result is that the experienced screen writer, the very man or woman

capable of creating the original screen plays for which Mr. Mankiewicz so eloquently calls, is kept busy year in and year out on material owned by the studios. If his contract with one major studio expires, he is at once besieged with offers from the others. If he resists these offers, does he sit down and write an original screen play? He does not. He writes a play or a book, because he is enough of an egotist to relish being able to read his name on advertising matter without using a microscope, and enough of an economic animal to realize that the financial return for even a third-rate play is greater than that for a first-rate screen play, not only on Broadway, but in Hollywood itself.

The unpalatable truth is far too many of the originals (and I except musicals, biographies, western and action scripts written on salary in the studios) are written by writers out of work in the hope of earning some quick money before the next job comes up. Far too many of them are written by writers who, because of youth, inexperience or incompetence, are incapable of writing screen plays. I know; I have been there.

And most of the originals are not screen plays at all. They are synopses for screen plays, blueprints, not buildings. The reason for this is easily understood. It takes anywhere from three months to a year to create a screen play. How many writers can afford to allot this time to a gamble in a limited market? Why should they when they realize that the purchasing studios, when and if, will undoubtedly have their screen plays rewritten past all recognition?

It all boils down to this: there is no incentive to write original screen

plays. Until there is an incentive, few of quality will be written. The successful writers will continue to work on studio-owned material, the unsuccessful will continue to write desperate little synopses, and the handful who are strongwilled (and well-heeled) enough to withstand studio offers will continue to write for other media. And, praise the Lord, one or two of the desperate little synopses will come through as strong, exciting screen plays, and their authors will forthwith become transmogrified, vanish within the studio gates and never have to write originals again.

It would be unfair to Mr. Mankiewicz to ask him to produce a list of his own original screen plays. He has been kept far too busy this last decade to write any. Mr. Mankiewicz knows his trade, and the studios are properly appreciative. Since he has directed my last two scripts with taste and skill, I might add that so am I. But if he now, like Peter the Hermit, proposes to lead a crusade out of the modernistic offices and into the garrets, I doubt if he will find many followers. When I get time off, I shall either write a play or go fishing. And I think he will, too.

### MILTON KRIMS:

THE telegram requested three hundred to one thousand words on how newer writers can learn their trade thoroughly under present conditions. Just like that . . . simple as any old basic problem of living and eating and being true to one's ideals and the demands of one's integrity. Skipping the three hundred to one thousand words part of the request, let's analyze the rest of the sentence; let's find some definitions and see whether or not they'll help us find the answer.

First, there are the rather sad



words — “newer writers.” What is meant by “newer writers”? Does it mean those who have just begun to work at the business of writing, the beginner fiction writer, the hopeful dramatist? Or does it mean writers new to Hollywood? Before I’m accused of quibbling, I hasten to say the fundamentals of screen writing — in my opinion — are the same as in any other media. A story-teller is as good as his story. Consequently, one must assume the newer writer, i.e., the writer new to Hollywood, has learned the art of story telling, regardless of medium.

If he hasn’t then it will mean nothing for him to learn the facts of screen story telling.

The next phrase is — “learn their trade.” By definition, we are assuming the newer writer has learned the fundamentals of good story telling and is now deliberately and of his own free will determined to use them as a basis for screen story telling. We are promptly faced with a diversity of opinions as vast and often as confusing as an MGM budget, not counting retakes. I can only offer mine for what it’s worth. There is no mystery to the mechanics of movie-making. There is a camera, there is a sound track, there is a cutting room, a dubbing room, a thing called special effects, all kinds of exciting mechanical activities, all plainly marked by small signs on buildings tucked away between stages. I’ve never yet met one of the gentlemen or ladies involved in these wonderful processes who wasn’t definitely delighted at the opportunity of explaining how his or her particular job really made the movies.

Then there are the already produced motion pictures, great ones, even bad ones, sometimes crowded with imaginative achievements, sometimes offering only a single moment that can be recognized as the humble offering of true artistic inspiration. These are the newer writer’s text books, available in direct ratio to his own curiosity, his desire to study what has been done, his will to learn to understand, through review and study, this potentially greatest of all artistic media.

And I say if the newer screen writer, assuming he has already learned the fundamentals of good writing, has done all this — and is still dissat-

isfied with his knowledge of screen writing as such, he needs to examine his own curiosity and re-evaluate the creativeness of his own imagination.

So we come to the last and third phrase — “under present conditions.” I will — for a moment — seemingly refute something I wrote in the previous paragraph. I have never ceased to marvel at the stupidity of producers who expect fine screen plays from untrained writers or from successful dramatists and novelists who have too often turned up their noses at anything Hollywood other than its money. Does this same producer think his particular brand of Scotch is blended by a beginner who has not been given a decent chance to learn his trade? Doesn’t this same producer often tell you at great length how he started as a cutter or an office boy or even a waiter? And in some instance when reason finally fails, doesn’t he refer to his “long experience” as if it were a weapon capable of destroying logic? I do not blame producers entirely for writer ineptitude, but I do believe they are at least partially responsible by not urging the newer writer to spend more time on stages.

I will go even further; I will say that newer writers should be expected to spend at least one month on a stage before being asked to write a screen play. And then, after he has written his first screen play, he should be encouraged to follow it through every phase of production. I, of course, realize that is only possible for contract writers. For the newer free lance writer, something should be worked out with the studios whereby a writer certified by the Screen Writers’ Guild will be given the opportunity to watch production for at least one month. Not only the writer but the studio would profit from some such arrangement.

Producer attitude toward writers is — to put it mildly — short-sighted. Much of it however, is the fault of the writer himself. Writing, in any medium, is not easy; it takes hard labor, constant discouragement and continuous self-education to achieve the high standards inherent in fine writing. It takes the severest kind of self-criticism to beget the humility that eventuates in great creative accomplishment.

I know how difficult the writer’s task is in this motion picture indus-

try; I have lived through most of its hazards; I am still far from overcoming many of its obstacles. And I know how quickly the truly creative mind is discouraged and sometimes destroyed by stupid and even intellectually dishonest restraints ranging from inept producers to infantile censorship. But I also know the history of both the drama and literature is crowded with similar seemingly tragic restraints. Yet each survived and produced greatness on greatness. And always it was the writer who fought and suffered to produce this greatness.

The motion picture is — in my opinion — the greatest medium of expression yet devised. Also the youngest of the art forms. Even now, it is still going through a period of transition in which it is trying to learn the proper use of sound in what was conceived as a silent medium. There are hundreds of other problems, problems having to do with the eternal intangibles of truly creative progress. I believe many of these are essentially the writer’s problems . . . as they have always been the writer’s problems. There must come a day when producers will recognize them as such and accept the writer’s solutions.

But the writer must also be capable of finding the solutions. Therefore, the wise producer will help the writer learn the complex mechanics of movie making. The rest is up to the writer. To his knowledge of story telling he will need to add the integrity and the courage to fight against the destruction of the results of that knowledge.

There is no easy road to learning any kind of writing. There never has been. It’s a miserable profession under almost any conditions . . . if you really work at it.

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ALLEN RIVKIN:

I MUST agree with everything that Benoit-Levy and Mankiewicz wrote in the May Screen Writer as I must agree that cancer must be conquered. I’m afraid, however, that Jean and Joe don’t go far enough with their argument. A “film author” can learn his craft as solidly as a surgeon allegedly learns his, but when a surgeon



does his final sewing-up, it is not likely that the head of the hospital will reserve the right to do more cutting.

What Benoit-Levy and Mankiewicz should have insisted, it seems to me, is that once the film author is employed, he be left alone from the beginning of the writing to the time the final negative goes to the lab for prints. Does that happen today with any of the truly brilliant writer-directors or writer-producers Joe has listed? Perhaps with some; certainly not with all.

In major studios, the front office still reserves the prerogative of bitching the product no matter what contractual authority the film author has. I say this must stop. When the head men hire — "delighted" as they are — that film author who has learned his trade and earned the respect of his colleagues, that's it, brother, and no interference by men who have money instead of mentality.

Until that period in our industry comes, Jean's and Joe's film authors are kidding themselves, but strictly.

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### ALBERT LEWIN:

I WISH I were able to make some practical suggestion to newer writers to guide them in their efforts to "learn their trade" and become "film authors." But in this fiercely competitive business the chances are they will have to scratch for their sustenance.

If they are sufficiently hungry and sufficiently in earnest about film-writing, as as distinct from other kinds of creative writing, the chances are they will learn what they have to know. If they can persuade the unions involved, and the producers concerned, to allow them to put in an actual stint as script clerk and cutter, or assistant cutter, nothing in the world could be of more enduring value.

Failing this, they might study a few great pictures intensively, running them over and over again until they know them cut for cut, camera angle for camera angle; and until the pattern of each scene, as staged by the director, has been apprehended and

appreciated. Let them go to school to a great picture like William Wyler's *Dodsworth*, screening it not once, but thirty times, and do the same with John Ford's *The Informer*.

It is a pity that masters like Wyler, Ford, Lubitsch and Hitchcock cannot have schools of literary and directorial apprentices to study their style. (There are so few who have what can be called a style — so that their work, unsigned, is still as readily recognizable as the music of Mozart or the prose of Joseph Addison.) This was the happy practice of the great Renaissance painters, but it is, no doubt, too much to hope for in the movies. It doesn't even exist any longer in painting.

In the old days there was a good deal of Hollywood shop-talk, discussion of technical, narrative and aesthetic difficulties, and this was healthy. Now we rarely hear anything but personal gossip and discussion of box-office returns. The vast, and as yet unsolved, problem of the co-ordination of visual and auditory rhythms, which is the central dilemma of the talking picture, is seldom fruitfully explored.

Lacking some radical solution, and none appears probable, I can only suggest these quite inadequate make-shifts. I'm afraid they won't prove of much help. For in the long run there is only one way to learn how to do anything and that is by doing it. I am optimist enough to think that, difficult as it is, if the talent is great enough the way will be found.

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### PRESTON STURGES:

HOW newer writers can also become genuine authors under present conditions or words to that effect:

The genuine author is distinguished by his lorgnon, his love of talk and his hatred of writing. He has dandruff on his collar and needs a shampoo.

Not being a genuine author, but only a playwright, it is so difficult for me to write prose, spelling out each word, wrestling with the grammar and tripping over the syntax, that I rarely contribute to symposia. What little I know of my profession I got out of a book called "A Study

of the Drama" by Brander Matthews which cost \$1.50.

In closing here are two pieces of advice given by two good playwrights: Dumas the Younger and Pierre Veber. The first said: "To write a successful play is very easy: Let the beginning be clear, the end be short, and let it all be interesting." The second said: "Never be afraid of boring them. When they are bored they think they are thinking. This flatters them."

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### NIVEN BUSCH:

MOST screen writers in their apprentice days feel that their biggest problem is getting the job rather than learning how to handle it. I think there is much to be said for this view. The process is injurious to writers only when they fail to learn by doing. If they want to find out how a picture is made there is nothing that I know of to prevent them. In any studio scripts are available for study and the pictures made from these scripts can be studied in turn, and the scripts then checked again for particulars of technique. This process provides a post-graduate course which rapidly produces specialists.

However, it is a form of education which is only available after a man has been hired; hence one raises the question—should there not be an opening in motion pictures for young writers trained directly for screen writing but lacking the qualifications in other fields of creative work which would ordinarily make them eligible for studio jobs?

I think that there is definitely a place for such writers and the colleges should be encouraged to supplement courses in motion picture art and history with practical craft work in writing and the technical fields.

The only campus that I know of that supplies such a course is USC where Clara Beranger's Cinema Workshop is attracting a large number of students, many of them former servicemen. European countries have long provided such courses. In Russia technical courses in all branches of film making, including screen writing, have been established for many years.



## DELMER DAVES:

Miss Beranger tells me that France has an Institute of Advanced Film Studies where students have the use of a large library pertaining to film making. If other industries like radio and television, not to mention electronics, steel and chemicals, can spend large sums each year training young men in research and special crafts, why can't Hollywood start a modest experiment along the same lines? I think it would pay off.

The suspicion still remains with me that even after college training and the study of scripts, the only practical way of learning the screen writing trade is to get on the set with a picture and stay with it up to and through the night of the sneak preview. Many writers who have been in the industry twenty years have never done this, but I believe it is a capsule that contains a complete educational program. If it doesn't work nothing will.

## NORMAN KRASNA:

I GOT your flattering wire and I sat myself right down and began to write three hundred words on "How newer writers can — etc., under present conditions?"

I was going along pretty good too, until it occurred to me I don't know much about present conditions. I haven't been a contract writer for about ten years, and the few pictures I've done since have been at home and out of town.

The basis of my piece was going to be on learning film technique by working for people — different people — you admire. Not the same person — even if he's a comfortable director to be teamed with — but with men from whom you can learn something new. Cast yourself carefully, like actors.

But, do those conditions prevail now? Can a young writer get a job without being tied to a long term contract?

I don't know, and frankly, I wouldn't want to advise so carelessly, to the possible damage of some budding career.

P.S. I think your magazine is wonderful.

IN 1942 I was assigned to direct my first picture, *Destination Tokyo*. After fourteen years of screen writing I thought I had mastered the craft, — but I was destined for a sharp lesson in humility. The lesson was learned alongside the camera where the muted sound of the sprockets whirling keeps pace with the dialogue and action taking place in front of the lens.

The film itself is cheap, a few cents a foot, — but the scenes being photographed represent an enormous investment in thought, energy, hope, labor, capital, careers, eagerness and despair, buoyancy and exhaustion; what is being photographed takes the combined efforts of dozens of departments, thousands of people, now channeled down to the hundred who may be on the shooting stage for the sole purpose of transferring your script or my script to film. Formerly, I took these things for granted, I don't any more. Writing a script at home or in my office I was too remote from all of this to think in these new terms.

My first lesson in humility came as I began photographing scenes I had written, — and everything I had written was literally under the spotlights on the set. I could hear the film racing through the sprocket holes, twenty-four frames a second, ninety feet a minute, and I soon realized why, on my sixty-day shooting schedule, an average of ONLY TWO MINUTES OF COMPLETED FILM PER DAY WAS PUT IN THE FILM EDITOR'S LONG ROW OF FILM CANS! Figure it out for yourself; sixty days of shooting, one hundred and twenty minutes of previewed film. What has this to do with screen writing? Be patient. Let's take a look at the budget: one million dollars — sixteen thousand, six hundred and sixty-six dollars per day. Then two minutes of film should be worth that much in money. \$8,333.00 per minute. Now, please add this to the second paragraph and you will begin to get the reason for my first embarrassed lesson: what I had written wasn't worth this overwhelming amount of human endeavor, it wasn't worth \$8,333.00 per minute.

The realization comes as those sprockets whirl beside your ear — the actors are saying your lines, making

your motions, and both are recorded on film racing through the camera, ninety feet a minute. Then and there is where I learned that the words had to be better, the action exactly right; the whirr of the sprockets taught me the lesson of the over-written scene. I could almost hear the sprocket holes groan: "You're saying this twice — it's taking twenty feet to get that jerk out the door — I've heard this before, every word of it — this scene was over twenty feet ago — this gal's been talking for over one hundred feet, but the yadada-yadada — goes on and on . . . it took her one hundred and eighty feet to say what she could have said in ten! One hundred and eighty feet? That's two minutes! That's a day's work!"

It's easier to over-write, we all know that. I used to indulge myself in long scenes, long scripts until I learned this added lesson: I have yet to see more than one hundred and twenty five pages of script represented in a finished film of normal feature length. All over that is trimmed out or cut out in chunks, even whole sequences — and until you realize the tremendous combined effort that goes into every foot of the film on the cutting room floor you won't realize the sin of over-writing. We cannot indulge ourselves, we must learn a lesson on this score from the playwrights in New York: THE PLAY MUST BE OVER AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK!

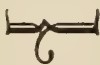
When you're ready to turn in your final script, give it the "sprocket hole test" — is every word of every page worth the combined efforts of thousands? If it isn't, edit it or write it over. And watch some of your script being shot, sit near the camera, listen for the sprockets turning frame by frame, foot by foot. After your film has been edited for release, ask the film editor to lend you his cutting script and compare the released version with your original script. See what was cut — even if you disagree with the cutting you may learn that very rarely is a scene cut because it played well!

The director quickly learns that he cannot "coast" through one foot of film, that one badly shot scene, even if it represents but twenty feet of film, will stand out to mar the effect of the whole.

Now I know that the same truth



applies to the writer — that one badly written scene, however short, not only causes the sprocket holes to groan, but the audience as well. I know. I, too, have suffered.



## Letter From Mexico

(Continued from Index Page)

important documents — which, I assume — writers are required to sign?"

"In quintuplicate," I corrected. "They are prepared by the lawyers for the companies."

"The same lawyers for all of them?"

"No, señor. Each film company has its own set of *abogados*."

Senores Bustamante and Portas shook their heads and the latter reached into a drawer and took out a paper — a single sheet, legal size. "This," he said, "is the contract which a Mexican screen writer signs. The only contract!"

I said that any writer offered a one-page contract either owns a piece of the company or is the producer's brother.

"All Mexican screen writers sign this contract. All!" Furthermore, he said, it is the only contract which the Sindicato de Trabajadores, etc., etc., as the parent organization of every film worker in the country will allow him to sign. And no waivers of anything in it.

"Does it say in that contract that the writer shall be at his desk by 9:30 every morning and remain until 5:30, Pacific Standard Time?"

"It says there," Portas answered, "that the writer agrees to deliver a script for a certain amount of money to be paid to him at certain stages of his work — and he works wherever he chooses — at the Mexico City race track or the bull-ring if he finds it more comfortable there."

"You have a minimum salary for the screen writer?"

"We do not call it salary, we call it compensation. And we call him not a screen writer but an *adaptador* as distinguished from the *autor* who sells original works that still need processing, to a producer. The minimum is 5,000 pesos. The maximum is not stated, and is of course not as high as in Hollywood. A good price for an original story or for making it into a shooting script is from 25,000 to 50,000 pesos. The screenplay is considered as valuable as the original property."

Still a little bewildered at the brevity of the Mexican contract I asked Senor Portas whether there are any misunderstandings at times, due to vagueness.

"One in a thousand. Let me read you from Clause Nine. *Both parties agree that all points relating to observation, interpretation or execution of this contract shall be under the jurisdiction of the Federal Tribunals of Labor.* In other words, the law of the land determines whether a contract has been fairly lived up to by either party."

And I had been in Mexico long enough to understand that the Federal Tribunals of labor of the Mexican Republic have a paternal concern for the creative worker as well as the wage-trabajador.

"In America," I told him, "when there are disputes we too have certain machinery for adjustment. Arbitration, conciliation, grievance commitment. . ."

"Here in Mexico," offered Senor Bustamante, "we have one inter-industry group to settle those matters. It is called the Committee of Honor and Justice."

He read me another delicious little clause from the Mexican contract: *The producer agrees to respect the adaptation (screenplay) dealt with by this contract and not to modify, mutilate or make additions thereto without the written permission of the adaptador (screen writer) given through the Sindicato.*

"That means," I stuttered, "that after the producer has settled with the writer and kissed him off (con

*besos y embrasos*) he can't mess around with the script! This is a little fantastic, señor."

"You are assuming, Senor Kahn," Mr. Portas said, "that after the producer has paid money to the writer he has *bought* something. That, if I may say so, is a misapprehension. He has bought nothing. *Nada!*" And he quoted me from *Clausula Cinco*. (Clause Five) of the contract:

*The Sindicato assigns to the producer the literary rights to produce the production mentioned in this contract. This assignment of exclusive film rights will hold good for a period of five years after which time the author will resume absolute title and possession of his work.*

(Memo: Please send these gentlemen a copy of our American Authors Supplement.)

It was clear from this clause referring to the five-year lease of the written work that the writers' section of the Sindicato is the repository of the copyright, holding it in trust for the author.

And what happens after five years? What about re-issues and remakes, I asked them. There are pictures playing in the States that are far older. Does the Mexican screen writer get additional compensation if his picture is re-issued or remade?

"*Seguro que si! Clausula Ocho.* Listen; *It is understood that when the film mentioned under this contract has been exhibited more than five years, counting from the date of the premiere, the producer shall pay the adaptador a bonus of not less than 50% of the sum (paid him for his work previously) without which payment the producer shall cease to exhibit the film.*

"Cease to exhibit the film!" I gasped. "What about the company getting its lawyers busy? Courts — injunctions — counter-injunctions!"

"Hombre," said Mr. Bustamante with quiet tolerance, "what projectionist who is a member of the same Sindicato as the writer will turn the crank?"

*Hasta luego,*

Kahn.

# Report and Comment

## ABOUT GUILD MEETINGS

ARNOLD BELGARD:

The purpose of this article is to present a procedural plan for Guild meetings. The article itself is the culmination of a series of letters between myself and our Executive Board.

On the premise that Guild meetings are poorly attended because of the tedious, bitter, minor arguments attendant on each subject under discussion, I offered my plan to the Board in the form of a letter. I am no parliamentarian. I do not know the feeling of the Board in regard to the idea. I know only that they have requested me to present it for membership review through the medium of our magazine.

Before proceeding I'd like to offer the impressions I take with me after each of our meetings. I think the meetings are:

1. Boring. In that every subject, no matter how innocuous, is argued pro and con by a group of die-hards who see it as stemming originally either from the Kremlin or the peripatetic bailiwick of Gerald L. K. Smith. The same arguments pertain, no matter what the subject happens to be!
2. Intolerable. In that there is no ending these discussions.
3. Frustrating. In that out of sheer desperation we often find ourselves voting on questions that have been touched only on the fringes — the real issues having been neatly skirted by the bevy of speakers.
4. Insulting. In that we, as thinking adults, can make up our minds on the average run of questions without the earnest, enduring chant

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ARNOLD BELGARD, a member of SWG, recently outlined this proposal to the Executive Board.

of the innumerable speakers who belabor us with their oft-reiterated phrases.

It is because of these four factors that a large group of normally interested writers abstain from sitting in at meetings they would otherwise be eager to attend. They send in their proxies, and they vote as preordained by the proxy holder — not as they might have, had they been present to hear intelligent debate.

I have no real quarrel with our vociferous chums. I believe them earnest, sincere crusaders. A good many of them are my friends. I quarrel only with the fact that what they say is not necessary in the least, although under the democratic way of life, they are entitled to, and take, the floor from now on and forevermore.

But you who have attended meetings know that when Mr. Lavery reaches the breaking point (his tolerance is much greater than mine), he rolls up his sleeves, sets everyone straight as to the issue in point, gives us a quick summary of the pros and cons, and again takes his chair. Rarely after this, is there further discussion. There is no need for any.

So, at long last, here is the structure of our meetings as I want to see them conducted. I want to see a thoroughly planned and *prepared* agenda. Prepared is italicized because it is the keynote of the plan: *A Forum Group in Action*, rather than a hodgepodge of word makers. Here is how it would work:

Let us say that our agenda is made up of a series of Committee Reports. It usually is. I want to hear the committee chairman's report in full — complete with recommendations. Instead of ad lib discussion, I next want to hear the views of the opposition from within the committee itself. This speaker is eminently qualified to give us the reasons behind the original dissenting votes. Again, instead of ad lib discussion, the committee chairman will present the reasons why the dissenters were voted down. And if there were not final unanimity within the committee, the opposition

would be entitled to a final rebuttal.

Now we are ready to hear from the floor. If there is room for further discussion, let it come from the floor through the chairman (as moderator) to the debater in the form of a question. These people on the rostrum have been through the subject at great length. They know the answers. Their responses, instead of being ad libbed, will be the result of considered thought.

And from here on, any individual who presumes to add weight to a completed argument had better have something solid to place in the scales or else think twice before speaking.

I believe the forum group to be as democratic in principle as our present meeting form.

This plan is presented on the assumption that we have elected our officers and Board in the good faith that they will carry out the desires of the membership. That the trust we place in them and the committees to which our various problems are thrown does not end with the mere submission of a report.

As with practically all bodies democratic, there is a fair split of those who think on the left, in the center, and on the right. All three ideologies are to be found among our officers, our Board members, and our every important committee. Either we trust them to do the ground work or we, as a body must do it. There's no sense in wasting their time — and they use up plenty of it — if we disregard what they have to report upon completion of their work.

Let's not make up our collective minds at the last minute after having been detoured away from the original report by the hot-tongued orators of the night. Let's do things right. Let's have full membership attendance. They'll come to meetings that maintain a lively interest, and that don't run off on divergent tangents every two minutes for hour after bitter hour.

Let's have our meetings be forum in shape. Let's not step on our toes any longer. Let's progress as a body.



## Correspondence

*The following communication has been received from Jules C. Goldstone of the Jules Goldstone-Al Manuel, Inc. agency:*

In your issue of May, 1947, under an article written by Martin Field entitled, *Twice-Sold Tales*, reference was made to a transaction in which Clarence Brown and I were involved.

Since I feel that the implications in the reference were unfair and damaging, I should like the opportunity to furnish you with the *full facts*. In this connection I will be glad to open my files on the matter to the inspection of anyone duly authorized by you to examine them.

JULES C. GOLDSTONE.

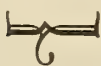
*Martin Field of the Editorial Committee has submitted the following statement in reply:*

As the authorized representative of THE SCREEN WRITER and also as the author of *Twice-Sold Tales*, I acted on the invitation of Jules C. Goldstone to examine his files in the matter.

I examined in detail the books, documents, and contracts concerning the transaction referred to in my article.

I am happy to be able to correct any statement or implication in the article suggesting unfair dealings on the part of either Mr. Brown or Mr. Goldstone. Any criticism whatsoever of their conduct is unfounded.

MARTIN FIELD.



## News Notes

★Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture are: A British-American Documentary: The True Glory, June 2, 3, 4, 5; A Short History of Animation: Animated Paint-

ings, Drame Chez les Fantoche, Gertie the Dinosaur, The Big Swim, Newman's Laugh-o-Grams, Felix Gets the Can, Steamboat Willie, Flowers and Trees, Les Trois Petits Cochons, June 6, 7, 8; Theatrical and Social Dancing in Film: In Seville, Moment Musicale, The Whirl of Life, Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (excerpt), Anna Pavlova test shots, Our Dancing Daughters (excerpt), The Skeleton Dance, Swing Time, June 9, 10, 11, 12; Great Actresses of the Past: Madame Sans-Gene, La Dame aux Camelias, Vanity Fair, Cenere, June 13, 14, 11; Legend and Fantasy (I): Skladanowsky's Primitives, Don Juan's Wedding, Misunderstood, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, June 16, 17, 18, 19; Legend and Fantasy (II): The Gold-em, June 20, 21, 22; Legend and Fantasy (III): Destiny, June 23, 24, 21, 26: The Psychological Drama (I): Warning Shadows, June 27, 28, 29; Legend and Fantasy (IV): Siegfried, June 30, July 1, 2, 3.

★A group of unusually interesting paintings by Herbert Klynn, Julius Engel and Oskar Fischinger is on exhibition at the American Contemporary Gallery, 6727½ Hollywood Boulevard, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily except Monday. All three painters are Hollywood artists. Herbert Klynn is the well-known screen artist who is now working in the field of industrial design and who has given material assistance to THE SCREEN WRITER in designing the format of the magazine. His paintings have been widely exhibited throughout the nation.

★SWG member Millen Brand's new novel, *Albert Sears*, will be published June 30 by Simon & Schuster. The novel is the story of two families, one white and the other Negro, and of how they affect each other in a Jersey City real estate fracas.

★Gordon Kahn, editor of THE SCREEN WRITER, examines the motion picture fan magazines as the subject of his contribution for May to the Atlantic Monthly. Title of the article is *The Gospel According to Hollywood*.

★SWG member Robert Wilder is at work on a new historical novel, *Bright Feather*, according to his publishers, G. P. Putnam's Sons, who announce that the story is about the Seminole Indians in Florida and the

independent nation they still maintain—a nation which declared its own war on Germany, Italy and Japan. The novel is announced for publication in the spring of 1948.

★*The Twisted Mirror*, a new mystery novel by SWG member Leonard Lee, is on the fall publishing list of Ziff-Davis.

★Harcourt-Brace will publish SWG member Valentine Davies' story, *Miracle on 34th Street* as a novel, with publication date probably in August. Item of particular interest in relation to this is fact that it was first sold as an original story to Fox, where it has been produced as a picture, with Fox re-assigning publication rights to Davies.

★*The Sunday Pigeon Murders* by SWG member Craig Rice is out in a Pocket Books edition. Samuel Spe-wack's *The Skyscraper Murder* has also been published in small size as an addition to the Parsee library.

★*The Big Yankee*, the biography of Evans Carlson by SWG member Michael Blankfort, is making the best seller lists. It was the subject of a recent article by SWG member Guy Trosper in the AVC News.

★Pasadena Playhouse's 13th annual Midsummer Drama Festival, slated from June 24 to August 17, will feature eight varied plays, as follows: *Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch*, by Alice Hegan Rice, June 24-29; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, first Playhouse staging of Shakespeare, July 1-16; *Melloney Hotspur*, by John Masefield, July 8-13; *School for Scandal*, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, July 13-20; *Arms and the Man*, by Bernard Shaw, July 22-27; *The Great God Brown*, by Eugene O'Neill, July 29-August 3; *Alice Sit-By-The-Fire*, by James M. Barrie, August 5-10; *Girl of the Golden West*, by David Belasco, Aug. 12-17.

★The Hollywood Film Society opened its first season in its New Coronet Theatre, 366 N. La Cienega, Los Angeles, with a Greta Garbo film, as scheduled. Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize play, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, will be presented at the same theatre for a three or four weeks season, beginning June 5 and starring Jane Wyatt, Keenan Wynn, Blanche Yerka, Hurd Hatfield, Carol Stone, Elizabeth Fraser. Play will be pro-

duced by Robert McCahon and directed by Paul Guilfoyle.

★Since the poetic sequence, *Two Poems of Hollywood*, by John Motley appeared in the May issue of THE SCREEN WRITER, many inquiries have been made concerning the identity of the poet. His real name is Bernard C. Schoenfeld, member of THE SCREEN WRITER Editorial Committee.

★SWG member Roland Kibbee's article, *Stop Me If You Wrote This Before*, published in the May issue of THE SCREEN WRITER, and illustrated by Samuel Fuller, has been widely quoted in the national press and on the radio. Since Kibbee is one of Hollywood's outstanding screen writers, with a distinguished record of credits in the motion picture business, his article has been quoted as an illustration of the fact that the industry is not always pompous and solemn in talking about itself.

★Current serial in SEPost at this writing is *Too Late for Tears*, by SWG member Roy Huggins; current serial in Collier's at this writing is *Flight From Fear*, by SWG member Ketti Frings.

★For more than a quarter of a century under the owner-editorship of Rob Wagner, *Script*, our neighbor in Beverly Hills is now owned and published by a new management. The editor is James Felton, who had earlier been on the staff of the *Los Angeles Daily News* and a *Time-Life-Fortune* writer.

★Noel Meadow, a contributor to THE SCREEN WRITER, and B. L. Garner, who head Vog Film Co., have acquired three new French-language films, which they are presently editing for American presentation, prior to their New York premiere

shortly. Photoplays are: "Francis The First," a frankly escapist costume story reminiscent of Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court," starring Fernandel; "The Woman I Loved Most," with Arletty, currently in "Les Enfants Du Paradis" and Noel-Noel, star of "A Cage of Nightingales"; and "One Of The Legion," also with Fernandel. Messrs. Meadow and Garner were recently represented with "Lucrezia Borgia" and Pushkin's, "The Postmaster's Daughter," with Harry Baur. Incidentally, "Borgia" is having its West Coast premiere at the Sunset Theatre, in L.A., to be followed by the Larkin in S.F.

★China Film Enterprises of America, Inc., 35 Park Ave., New York 16, N. Y., announces as its object the showing of more and better pictures of China in America and to make good American and foreign films available to Chinese audiences. It offers writers, directors, producers and distributors a complete consultation service concerning pictures touching in any way on China or the Chinese people.

★Milton Krims, acting chairman of the SWG Special Program Committee, has announced a meeting with leading writers, directors and producers in the industry for discussion of the question: How can the screen writer find out how pictures are made? The date: June 5; place, the Walnut Room at Lucey's. The following have been invited to participate in a round table discussion and to answer questions: Dudley Nichols, Frank Capra, Joe Sistro, Dore Schary, Joseph Mankiewicz, Billy Wilder, Adrian Scott, Nunnally Johnson, Robert Riskin, Walter MacEwen, John Huston, Ernst Lubitsch, Vincent Sherman, Charles Brackett, Mark Hellinger.

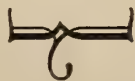
★The Industry Film Committee, organized to produce a good public relations film for the industry, had its third meeting May 19. Personnel of committee follows: N. Peter Rathvon, chairman and producer representative; Jack L. Warner, Donald Nelson and I. E. Chadwick, also representing the MPAA; Jean Hersholt, representing the Academy; Lester Cole and F. Hugh Herbert, representing the Screen Writers' Guild; Delmer Daves and Billy Wilder, representing the Screen Directors' Guild; Warner Anderson and Leon Ames, representing the Screen Actors' Guild. The May 19 meeting included exhibitor representatives.

★The People's Educational Center series of film showings, *Realism in the American Film*, concludes with the following showings: June 6th, *A Man To Remember*; June 13th, *Of Mice and Men*; June 20th, *Native Land*. All showings are at 8:15 at the Screen Cartoonists Hall.

★Helen Colton, wife of SWG member Martin Field, has been appointed west coast representative of Writers Newsletter, which goes only to publishers, editors, agents, and professional writers. Writers can phone her with news of their sales to magazines, publishers, screen, stage, and radio at GRanite 4327.

#### HOUSING NOTE

*Many members of the Screen Writers' Guild, including a number of veterans, are in desperate need of housing. Any members of SWG or any readers of THE SCREEN WRITER who know of available housing space are asked to get in touch with the Guild office, Hollywood 3601.*





A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

APRIL 1, 1947 TO MAY 1, 1947

B

**DWIGHT V. BABCOCK**  
Joint Screenplay (with Karen DeWolf) BURY  
ME DEAD (Eagle-Lion) PRC

**EDWARD BERNDT**  
Sole Screenplay PARDON MY TERROR, Col  
(S)  
Sole Screenplay MEET MR. MISCHIEF, Col  
(S)  
Sole Screenplay HOT HEIR, Col (S)  
Sole Screenplay SQUAREHEADS OF THE  
ROUND TABLE, Col (S)

**EDWARD BOCK**  
Sole Screenplay and Joint Adaptation (with  
Raymond L. Schrock) KEY WITNESS, Col

**ALLEN BORETZ**  
Joint Screenplay (with Howard Harris and  
Laszlo Vaday) COPACABANA (David L.  
Hersh) UA  
Joint Screenplay (with I. A. L. Diamond)  
TWO GUYS FROM TEXAS, WB

**MALCOLM STUART BOYLAN**  
Sole Original Screenplay THE SON OF  
RUSTY, Col

**HOUSTON BRANCH**  
Story Basis WILD HARVEST, Par

**LOU BRESLOW**  
Joint Screenplay (with George Wells) MER-  
TON OF THE MOVIES, MGM

**PETER R. BROOKE**  
Joint Screenplay (with Don Cameron) MID-  
NIGHT SERENADE, Par (S)

**HAROLD BUCHMAN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Charles Kaufman)  
CYNTHIA, MGM

C

**DON CAMERON**  
Sole Original Screenplay SMOOTH SAILING,  
Par (S)  
Joint Screenplay (with Peter R. Brooke)  
MIDNIGHT SERENADE, Par (S)

**VERA CASPARY**  
Story Basis and Joint Screenplay (with Wal-  
ter Bullock and Edward Eliscu) OUT OF  
THE BLUE (Eagle-Lion) PRC

**J. BENTON CHENEY**  
Sole Original Screenplay VALLEY OF FEAR,  
Mono  
Joint Screenplay (with Bennett R. Cohen  
and Ande Lamb) HOPPY'S HOLIDAY (Hop-  
along Cassidy) UA

**LEWIS CLAY**  
Joint Screenplay (with Arthur Hoerl and  
George Plympton) THE VIGILANTE (Esskay)  
Col  
Joint Screenplay (with Royal K. Cole, Ar-  
thur Hoerl and Leslie Swabacker) JACK  
ARMSTRONG (Esskay) Col

LESTER COLE

Sole Screenplay THE NIGHT RAIDERS, MGM

**HAL COLLINS**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Arthur Drei-  
fuss) HIGH SCHOOL HERO  
(Banner Prod.) Mono  
Sole Original Screenplay FREDDIE STEPS  
OUT (Banner Prod.) Mono  
Sole Original Screenplay VACATION DAYS,  
Mono  
Sole Screenplay SARGE GOES TO COLLEGE,  
Mono

**BETTY COMDEN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Adolph Green) GOOD  
NEWS, MGM

**MARC CONNELLY**  
Joint Play Basis (with George S. Kaufman)  
MERTON OF THE MOVIES, MGM

**MYLES CONNOLLY**  
Sole Screenplay THE UNFINISHED DANCE,  
MGM

D

**VALENTINE DAVIES**  
Sole Original Story MIRACLE ON 34th  
STREET, Fox

**ALBERT DEMOND**  
Sole Original Screenplay THE WILD FRON-  
TIER, Rep  
\*Contributor to Dialogue BLACKMAIL, Rep

**KAREN DEWOLF**  
Joint Screenplay (with Dwight V. Babcock)  
BURY ME DEAD (Eagle Lion) PRC

**I. A. L. DIAMOND**  
Joint Screenplay (with Allen Boretz) TWO  
GUYS FROM TEXAS, WB

**ARTHUR DREIFUSS**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Betty  
Wright) LITTLE MISS BROADWAY (Kay  
Pic.) Col

E

**EDWARD ELISCU**  
Joint Screenplay (with Walter Bullock and  
Vera Caspary) OUT OF THE BLUE (Eagle-  
Lion) PRC

F

**SIDNEY FIELDS**  
\*Joint Additional Dialogue (with Edwin Gil-  
bert) MY WILD IRISH ROSE, WB

**STEVE FISHER**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Bradley  
King) THAT'S MY MAN, Rep

**ALAN FRIEDMAN**  
Story Basis KILLER DILL (Screen Art)  
Screen Guild

\*Academy Bulletin Only

G

**GERALD GERAGHTY**  
Sole Original Story ON THE OLD SPANISH  
TRAIL, Rep

**EDWIN GILBERT**  
\*Joint Additional Dialogue (with Sidney  
Fields) MY WILD IRISH ROSE, WB

**FRANCES GOODRICH**  
Joint Screenplay (with Albert Hackett) THE  
PIRATE, MGM

**WILLIAM H. GRAFFIS**  
Joint Story Basis (with Robert E. Kent)  
DICK TRACY VS. THE GRUESOME GANG,  
RKO

**ADOLPH GREEN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Betty Comden)  
GOOD NEWS, MGM

H

**ALBERT HACKETT**  
Joint Screenplay (with Frances Goodrich)  
THE PIRATE, MGM

**HOWARD HARRIS**  
Joint Screenplay (with Laszlo Vaday and  
Alan Boretz) COPACABANA (David L.  
Hersh) UA

**LILLIE HAYWARD**  
Sole Original Screenplay BANJO, RKO

**JACK HENLEY**  
Joint Screenplay (with Arthur Marx)  
BLONDIE IN THE DOUGH, Col

**CARL K. HITTLEMAN**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Don Martin)  
THE HAT BOX MYSTERY (Screen Art)  
Screen Guild

**ARTHUR HOERL**  
Joint Screenplay (with Lewis Clay, Royal K.  
Cole and Leslie Swabacker) JACK ARM-  
STRONG (Esskay) Col  
Joint Screenplay (with Lewis Clay and  
George Plympton) THE VIGILANTE, (Ess-  
kay) Col

**EDWARD HUEBSCH**  
Sole Screenplay SPORT OF KINGS, Col

**DICK IRVING HYLAND**  
Sole Screenplay and Joint Original Story  
(with Lee Wainer) KILROY WAS HERE,  
Mono

J

**RIAN JAMES**  
Joint Screenplay (with Leonard Lee) WHIS-  
PERING CITY (Quebec Prods.)

\*Academy Bulletin Only

In this listing of credits, published every other month in THE SCREEN WRITER, the following abbreviations are used:  
COL — Columbia Pictures Corporation; E-L — Eagle-Lion Studios; FOX — 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; GOLDWYN —  
Samuel Goldwyn Productions, Inc.; MGM — Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios; MONO — Monogram Pictures Corporation; PAR  
— Paramount Pictures, Inc.; PRC — Producers Releasing Corporation of America; REP — Republic Productions, Inc.; RKO —  
RKO Radio Studios, Inc.; ROACH — Hal E. Roach Studio, Inc.; UA — United Artists Corporation; UNI-INT'L — Universal-  
International Pictures; UWP — United World Pictures; WB — Warner Brothers Studios. (S) designates screen short.

**K**

**MACKINLAY KANTOR**  
Novel Basis THE NIGHT RAIDERS, MGM  
**CHARLES KAUFMAN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Harold Buchman)  
CYNTHIA, MGM  
**GINA KAUS**  
Joint Additional Dialogue (with Hugh  
Kemp) WHISPERING CITY (Quebec Prods.)  
**ROBERT E. KENT**  
Joint Story Basis (with William H. Graffis)  
DICK TRACY VS. THE GRUESOME GANG,  
RKO  
**BRADLEY KING**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Steve Fisher)  
THAT'S MY MAN, Rep  
**CECILE KRAMER**  
Joint Original Story (with Ellen Corby)  
HOPPY'S HOLIDAY (Hopalong Cassidy) UA

**L**

**ANDE LAMB**  
Sole Original Screenplay UNEXPECTED  
GUEST (Hopalong Cassidy) UA  
Joint Screenplay (with J. Benton Cheney  
and Bennett R. Cohen) HOPPY'S HOLIDAY  
(Hopalong Cassidy) UA  
**CONNIE LEE**  
Sole Original Screenplay BLONDIE'S HOLI-  
DAY, Col  
**LEONARD LEE**  
Joint Screenplay (with Rian James) WHIS-  
PERING CITY (Quebec Prods.)

**Mc**

**ROBERT F. McGOWAN**  
Sole Original Story CURLEY, Roach

**M**

**PHILIP MacDONALD**  
Sole Screenplay LOVE FROM A STRANGER  
(Eagle-Lion) PRC  
**AL MARTIN**  
Character Basis THE SON OF RUSTY, Col  
**DON MARTIN**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Carl K. Hit-  
tleman) THE HAT BOX MYSTERY (Screen  
Art) Screen Guild  
**ARTHUR MARX**

Joint Screenplay (with Jack Henley) and  
Sole Original Story BLONDIE IN THE  
DOUGH, Col  
**JOHN MONKS, JR.**  
Sole Screenplay WILD HARVEST, Par  
**FRED MYTON**  
Sole Original Screenplay PRAIRIE BADMEN,  
PRC

**N**

**SLOAN NIBLEY**  
Sole Screenplay ON THE OLD SPANISH  
TRAIL, Rep

**O**

**JOHN O'DEA**  
Sole Screenplay KILLER DILL (Screen Art)  
Screen Guild

**P**

**GEORGE PLYMPTON**  
Joint Screenplay (with Lewis Clay and Ar-  
thur Hoerl) THE VIGILANTE (Esskay) Col  
Sole Adaptation JACK ARMSTRONG, (Ess-  
kay) Col

**Q**

**LOUIS QUINN**  
Additional Dialogue KILROY WAS HERE,  
Mono

**R**

**IRVING RAVETCH**  
Joint Screenplay (with Gregory LaCava)  
LIVING IN A BIG WAY, MGM  
**EDWARD EARL REPP**  
Sole Original Screenplay THE STRANGER  
FROM PONCA CITY, Col  
Sole Original Screenplay PRAIRIE RAIDERS,  
Col  
**TIM RYAN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Edmond Seward)  
and Joint Original Story (with Edmond Sew-  
ard and George S. Cappy) SCAREHEADS,  
Mono

**S**

**RAYMOND SCHROCK**  
Joint Adaptation (with Edward Bock) KEY  
WITNESS, Col  
**GEORGE SEATON**  
Sole Screenplay MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET,  
Fox  
**BARRY SHIPMAN**  
Sole Original Screenplay RIDERS OF THE  
LONE STAR, Col  
**LESLIE SWABACKER**  
Joint Screenplay (with Lewis Clay, Royal K.  
Cole and Arthur Hoerl) JACK ARMSTRONG  
(Esskay) Col

**T**

**ERIC TAYLOR**  
Joint Screenplay (with Robertson White)  
DICK TRACY VS. THE GRUESOME GANG,  
RKO

**V**

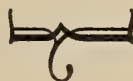
**LASZLO VADNAY**  
Joint Screenplay (with Allen Boretz and  
Howard Harris) COPACABANA (David L.  
Hersh) UA

**W**

**GEORGE WELLS**  
Joint Screenplay (with Lou Breslow) MER-  
TON OF THE MOVIES, MGM  
**ORSON WELLES**  
Sole Screenplay THE LADY FROM SHANG-  
HAI, Col  
**ROBERTSON WHITE**  
Joint Screenplay (with Eric Taylor) DICK  
TRACY VS. THE GRUESOME GANG, RKO  
**J. DONALD WILSON**  
Sole Original Story KEY WITNESS, Col

**Z**

**GEORGE ZUCKERMAN**  
Joint Story Basis (with Paul Lennox) WHIS-  
PERING CITY, (Quebec Productions)



## Participation Pay-Off

The greatest participating deal ever made by a writer for motion pictures was consummated by Thomas Dixon, author of *The Clansman*.

Dixon had lunch with D. W. Griffith in New York in 1913 and in consideration for the motion picture rights to his novel the author received \$5,000 cash and TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF THE GROSS of the picture.

The picture was *The Birth of a Nation* and it grossed more than \$15,000,000.

Years later Dixon told Frank Woods, former secretary of the Academy, that he was ashamed to look a royalty check in the face.



# NEXT MONTH AND THEREAFTER

JEAN RENOIR

EUGEN SHARIN

ORSON WELLES

MICHAEL BALCON

ROY HUGGINS

LESTER KOENIG

WILLIAM ORNSTEIN

HERBERT CLYDE LEWIS

F. HUGH HERBERT

HARRY BERNSTEIN

MORRIS COHN

NOEL MEADOW

DAVID MOSS

Chaplin and His Art

Disunion in Vienna

The Bob Meltzer I knew

Letter From London

Writers & Publishers

Gregg Toland: The Man and His Work

Can't Scare the Movies

Writers Who Paint

Bindle Biog

Reading For the Movies

What Is a License of Literary Property

French Cinema in the U. S.

New Blood, or the Arteries Seem to Be Frozen

Also: Story Editors Look at Writers; and further articles by LOUIS ADAMIC, SYDNEY BOX, HUGO BUTLER, I. A. L. DIAMOND, EARL FELTON, MARTIN FIELD, SHERIDAN GIBNEY, ARTHUR KOBER, FRANK LAUNDER, STEPHEN LONGSTREET, ST. CLAIR McKELWAY, IRVING PICHEL, EMERIC PRESSBURGER, GEORGE SEATON, ARTHUR STRAWN, DALTON TRUMBO, PETER VIERTEL, JOSEPH WECHSBERG, and others.

## Special Announcement

Inquiries have been made of the Editorial Committee regarding the recent "grand tour" of motion picture studios by Eric Johnston, chief of the producers' association. During these appearances, Mr. Johnston issued a body of new directives affecting the content of coming features. In not all cases, however, were his directions accepted without protest.

The Editorial Committee has appointed a special sub-committee to collate material on this development in the industry, and a definitive "round-up" article is in preparation.

*The Editor*

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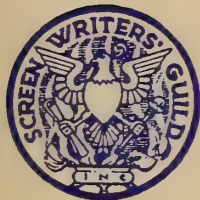
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# *In Preparation*



## The SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD Official SCREEN CREDIT ANNUAL

**THE FIRST COMPLETE AND AUTHORITATIVE LISTING OF CREDITS  
EARNED BY PROFESSIONAL SCREEN WRITERS ON ALL MOTION PICTURE  
RELEASES, INCLUDING SHORTS AND EDUCATIONAL FILMS.**

- The volume will include the entire text of the SWG CREDIT MANUAL issued for the guidance of writers and containing the following data:
  - What to do When Assigned to a Story Collaboration.
  - The Machinery of Credit Arbitration.
  - Rules for determining Credit.
  - Procedure of the Credit Arbitration Committee.
- A section of the OFFICIAL SCREEN CREDIT ANNUAL will be devoted to the history of screen credit determination with articles by noted screen writers and authorities in the field. Also the text of Schedule "A" of the Minimum Basic Agreement between the Guild and the various film producing companies which authorizes the SWG as the final arbiter of writing credits.
- A section will be devoted to instructions for copyrighting and registering manuscripts with the Mss. Registration Service of the Screen Writers' Guild.

**This edition of the OFFICIAL SCREEN CREDIT ANNUAL, bound in cloth and of convenient desk-size format, will be limited to several thousand to supply only those directly concerned with motion picture activity.**

**The publication date will be Dec. 15, 1947. The price of the CREDIT ANNUAL will be \$2 postpaid.**

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**Screen  
Writer**

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ing bookstores and newsstands:

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# The Screen Writer

## *The Freedom of the Screen*

A Report of Activity and an Analysis of Trends Affecting Motion Pictures as a Free Medium of Artistic Expression, By ARCHER WINSTEN, BOSLEY CROWTHER, DORE SCHARY, ELIA KAZAN, MARTIN FIELD, VLADIMIR POZNER, MORRIS E. COHN, BERNARD C. SCHOENFELD and Others.

**SPECIAL SECTION—Page 8**

JEAN RENOIR: *Chaplin Among the Immortals*

MEYER LEVIN: *Writing and Realization*

SHERIDAN GIBNEY: *The Future of Screen Writing*

HARRY BERNSTEIN: *Reading For the Movies*

RAYMOND CHANDLER: *Critical Notes*

STEPHEN LONGSTREET: *Hollywood Eye Test*

Announcing

**THE ROBERT MELTZER AWARD**

Vol. 3, No. 2

July, 1947

25c



Book Review by Emmet Lavery  
Report and Comment: The  
Wailing Wall at Lucey's by G.K.  
& How Are Pictures Made, by  
R. S. • Writer Employment  
Symposium, by David Moss,  
Finlay McDermid, William  
Nutt and Richard Sokolove •  
Correspondence • News  
Notes • Screen Credits



*Robert Meltzer was a good deal more than a talented writer. He was a good deal more than talented, and a good deal more than a writer. If he'd lived I think he would have been an important writer. Before he died he was already an important human being.*

*His was a disciplined intelligence, a mind wholly free, informed with a focused curiosity, and anchored to a big, warm sympathy.*

*There had better be more of his sort, if our literature is to survive, and if the democratic cause is still to be defended.*

--- Orson Welles

## *The Robert Meltzer Award*

WITH this announcement, *The Screen Writers' Guild* institutes an annual award for the writing of that American feature film which, in addition to its value as entertainment most effectively contributes to a better understanding of the problems of our times.



The award shall be in memory of *Robert Meltzer, David Silverstein, Frederick Faust, Edward de Melcher and Arch Heath*, members of the SWG who gave their lives in the Second World War.



*The Robert Meltzer Award* shall be given all writers credited with work on the film so honored, including the authors of the original work if the film is adapted from a play, novel, story or other written source.



THE RULES: During the first week of January, 1948, and every year thereafter, the entire list of films released during the preceding year shall be sent to all active members of *The Screen Writers' Guild*. Each member will select not more than six films which he wishes to place in nomination. These nominations must be in the office of the Guild by midnight of January 20. Upon tabulation, the six films receiving the greatest number of votes will be announced and thereafter arrangements will be made for general membership viewing.

Voting for the film to receive *The Robert Meltzer Award* will begin immediately thereafter by mail. Balloting will continue for ten days. The award will be made at an annual dinner to be held soon thereafter.

*The Screen Writers Guild* has authorized the sum of \$1,500 annually to comprise the award and the cost of the undertaking.

*The Robert Meltzer Award Committee*  
*Melville Baker*  
*Lester Cole*  
*Maurice Rapf*

# Two Letters From London

*MICHAEL BALCON, noted figure in the British motion picture industry and production head of the Ealing Studios, comments here on the article by Herbert Margolis published in the April issue of THE SCREEN WRITER on the UNESCO film student exchange plan.*

ALTHOUGH Britain today is making films of an international quality, I am ashamed to say as an Englishman that we are much behind some other countries in fostering an interest and technical education in films. It is for this reason that I welcome warmly the plan for the international exchange of students.

I am afraid that it is only in recent years that Government departments and educational bodies, to say nothing of the churches, have come to appreciate in our country the sociological significance of the cinema, but the tardiness has been compensated by the enthusiasm of the convert; it seems to me, therefore, that this excellent suggestion should receive not only the whole-hearted support of the British film industry but also of other bodies which could help to make it a success here.

I read with real envy of four thousand students in America taking film courses at major universities and colleges throughout the country. We, alas, are only on the threshold of sponsoring such things, although I know that all our own universities have groups of students whose intention it is to take up technical work in films as a career.

I myself and the technicians who work with me at Ealing Studios have spent a lot of time, particularly in the last four or five years, lecturing on various aspects of film making to groups of students all over the country and it is heartening indeed to think that these enthusiasts may now be presented with real opportunities for studying not only in their own

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# The Screen Writer

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JULY, 1947

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K P O L T I E O V

SCREEN PLAY BY  
BY ALAN B. MILLER AND JAMES H. HANCOCK



# Chaplin Among the Immortals

JEAN RENOIR

*JEAN RENOIR, a member of SWG, is the internationally noted motion picture writer and director. Son of the French painter, Pierre Auguste Renoir, he was a journalist in France before turning to films and making a new chapter in screen history.*

*"Man is interested in only one thing: man."*

— PASCAL

**L**AST night, I had a strange dream. I was sitting at my diningroom table carving a leg-of-mutton. I went at it in the French manner, which is to slice it in length. In that way, you get a great variety of cuts. Those who like it well done are served first. You wait till you get closer to the bone, for those who prefer it rarer. My guests had been lost in a sort of fog, but as I asked each one how he liked his meat, they suddenly came into a very sharp focus, and I recognized them as people I admire and like. The couples of *The Best Years of Our Lives* were right there at my table, smiling amiably at me. I served them, and they ate with robust appetite. Next to them were the priest and the pregnant woman of *Open City*, a bit more reserved but no less cordial. At the end of the table, the loving pair of *Brief Encounter* were holding hands. This abandon was proof that they felt themselves among friends, and I was gratified by it. As I was about to proceed to the beautiful courtesan of *Children of Paradise*, the doorbell rang.

I went to open the door and found myself facing a gentleman of distinguished appearance. Offhand, he reminded me vaguely of someone I knew well, a little old tramp who had made the whole world laugh. But I quickly understood that the resemblance was merely physical. Even under the rich fur coat of a goldmine owner, the other one had remained a bit of a gutter-snipe. It was obvious that he would never completely get rid of his lowdown ways. Whereas this one, on the other hand, was most certainly the scion of a "good family." His parents had taught him proper table manners, and when and how to kiss a lady's hand. He had

breeding. And all of his person gave off that impression of suppressed passions, of hidden secrets, which is the earmark of the bourgeoisie in our old Western civilizations.

I introduced myself. With exquisite politeness which bespoke his old provincial background and his prep-school education, he told me his name was Verdoux. Then he placed his hat and cane on a chair, flicked a speck of dust from his jacket, adjusted his cuffs, and headed for the diningroom. Immediately, the others edged closer together to make room for him. They seemed happy to see him. Obviously, they were all members of the same social world.

After dinner, we went outdoors. But word of the presence of my famous guests had spread, and the street was crowded with people. When we walked down the porch steps, the public enthusiasm burst out. Everyone wanted to shake their hands, there was a terrific crush, the autograph-seekers were at work. Suddenly, a very dry lady, wearing an aggressive little hat, recognized Monsieur Verdoux and pointed a finger at him. And, strangely, the enthusiasm turned into fury. They rushed at him, raising their fists. I tried to understand, and kept asking the same question over and over again: "What did he do? What did he do? . . ." But I could not hear the answers, for everyone was speaking at once and the caning the poor man was taking made a deafening racket. So deafening, in fact, that I awoke with a start and had to close my window, which a sudden stormy wind was violently banging back and forth.

**I** DON'T believe that the people who attacked Chaplin so sharply over his latest film did so for personal or political reasons. In America we haven't yet reached



## THE SCREEN WRITER

that stage. I think rather that the trouble is their panic terror before total change, before a particularly long step forward in the evolution of an artist.

This is not the first time such a thing has happened, nor will it be the last. Molière was a victim of the same kind of misunderstanding. And the Hollywood commentators who have been unable to recognize the qualities of *Monsieur Verdoux* are in very good company, indeed. Molière's detractors had names no less important than La Bruyère, Fénelon, Vauvenargues, Sherer. They said he wrote badly. They criticized him for his barbarism, his jargon, his artificial phrasing, his improper usage, his incorrect wording, his mountains of metaphors, his boring repetitions, his inorganic style. "Molière," said Sherer, "is as bad a writer as one can be."

This animosity on the part of certain self-appointed intellectuals is not the only point of resemblance between the careers of Molière and Chaplin.

IN his early stages, the former achieved great success by simply following the traditions of the Italian Comedy. His characters bore the familiar names and costumes, their predicaments were those to which the public was accustomed. Only, beneath Sganarelle's makeup and behind Scapin's somersaults, the author injected a rarer element, a little human truth. But on the surface, there was not too much of an apparent change. When the action slowed down, a solid laying-on with a stick was always good for a laugh. The sentimental side was taken care of with formulae no different, except for the author's masterful touch, from those used elsewhere in the same period: a noble young gentleman falls in love with a scullerymaid and his family will have none of her. But, in the end, it all works out. It is revealed that the ingénue was really a well-born maiden who, as a baby, had been carried off by pirates.

Chaplin, to begin with, simply followed the traditions of the then most popular form in the world, English farce. His feet foul him up on the stairs and his hands get entangled in flypaper. The sentimental side in his films is represented by babies left on doorsteps, streetgirls mistreated by life, or other carryovers from the good old mellers. In spite of that, he never falls into the worst vulgarity of our time, phony bathetic goodness. And beneath his character's flour-face, as well as behind the fake beards of his companions, we rapidly discern real men of flesh and blood. As he grows, like Molière, he introduces into the conventional framework, which he has made his very own through the vigor of his talent, the elements of a sharper and sharper observation of humanity, of a more and more bitter social satire. Nevertheless, since the

appearances remain the same, no one is shocked, no one protests.

One day, Molière decided to give up the form which had brought him his success, and he wrote *The School for Wives*. Accusations were heaped upon him. He was called a mountebank. People became irritated with him because he was director, actor and writer all at the same time.

One day, Chaplin wrote *Monsieur Verdoux*. He turned his back on the outward forms to which he had accustomed his public. There was a great hue and cry of indignation, he was dragged through the mud.

After *The School for Wives*, instead of giving in, Molière went on hitting harder and harder. His next play was *Tartuffe*, which impaled phony religion and bigotry.

What will Chaplin's next film be?

I THINK it is unnecessary to explain why I like the Chaplin of the old school, since everyone seems to share that taste. It is even probable that some of the attackers of his present film must have written glowing tributes to *The Gold Rush* or *The Kid*. I would like, however, to present a few of the reasons which, to me, made the showing of *Monsieur Verdoux* a pure delight.

Like everybody else, I have my own ideas about what is conventionally called Art. I firmly believe that since the end of the period in which the great cathedrals were built, since the all-pervading faith which was to bring forth our modern world is no longer present to give artists the strength to lose themselves in an immense paean to the glory of God, there can be quality to human expression only if it is individual. Even in cases of collaboration, the work is valuable only insofar as the personality of each of the authors remains perceptible to the audience. Now, in this film, that presence is, to me, as clear as that of a painter in his canvas or of a composer in his symphony.

Moreover, every man matures, his knowledge of life increases, and his creations must develop at the same time he does. If we do not admit these truths in our profession, we might as well admit right now that it is an industry no different than the rest, and that we make films like efficiency experts supervise the production of iceboxes or shaving cream. And let's stop priding ourselves on being artists, and claiming that we're carrying forward the grand old traditions.

It is agreed, some will say, that Chaplin has created a highly personal work, and we admit that he has undergone a natural artistic transformation. We only feel that he has done all this in a wrong direction. And they add that the greatest crime of *Monsieur Verdoux* was the killing-off of the beloved little vagabond who had been such a charmer. His creator should not only

have kept him alive but depended on him in his search for a new form of expression. I cannot share this opinion.

In giving up the rundown shoes, the old derby hat and willowy cane of the raggedy little guy whose pathetic hangdog look used to melt our hearts, Chaplin has gone deliberately into a world that is more dangerous, because it is closer to the one we live in. His new character, with neatly-pressed trousers, impeccably-knotted tie, well-dressed and no longer able to appeal to our pity, does not belong in those good old situations, outlined in strong broad strokes, where the rich trample the poor in so obvious a manner that even the most childish audience can immediately grasp the moral of the story. Before, we could imagine that the adventures of the little tramp took place in some world that belonged exclusively to the movies, that they were a sort of fairy tale.

With *Monsieur Verdoux*, such misapprehension is no longer possible. This one really takes place in our time, and the problems faced on the screen are really our own. By thus giving up a formula which afforded him full security, and undertaking squarely the critique of the society in which he himself lives, a dangerous job if ever there was one, the author raises our craft to the level of the great classical expressions of the human mind, and strengthens our hope of being able to look upon it more and more as an art.

LET me add a purely personal note here: Having given up the powerful weapon which was the defenselessness of his old character, Chaplin had to look for another to be used by his latest creation. The weapon he chose is one that appeals particularly to the Frenchman in me, steeped as he is in the 18th Century: paradoxical logic.

I understand perfectly the misgivings of certain conformist minds before this method which seems to belong to a bygone aristocratic era. I hope they will forgive a devoted reader of the works of Diderot, Voltaire and Beaumarchais for the pleasure he found in *Monsieur Verdoux*.

Moreover, even when it is not thus spiced with paradoxical logic, genius often has something shocking about it, something subversive, some of the characteristics of a Cassandra. That is because it has better vision than ordinary mortals, and the commonsensical truths that it sees still strike the rest of us as something akin to madness.

Another reason for liking *Monsieur Verdoux*: I love to be amused at the movies, and this film made me laugh until my tears flowed like wine.

I believe I see growing up about me a certain taste for collective accomplishments, the anonymousness of which is a tribute to the adoration of new deities. Let me mention at random some of these false idols: public opinion polls, organization, technics. These are but the saints of a dangerous god that some are trying to substitute for the God of our childhood. This new divinity is called Scientific Progress. Like any self-respecting God, he tries to attract us with his miracles. For how else can one describe electricity, anaesthesia or atomic fission? But I am very leery of this newcomer. I am afraid that, in exchange for the refrigerators and the television sets that he will distribute so generously, he may try to deprive us of a part of our spiritual heritage.

In other times, every object was a work of art, in that it was a reflection of the one who made it. The humblest early American sideboard is the creation of one given woodworker, and not of any other. This personal touch was present in everything, in houses, in clothes, in food.

When I was young, in my village in Burgundy, when we drank a glass of wine, we could say: That comes from the Terre à Pot vineyard up over the hill behind the little pine wood, or from the Sarment Fountain, or from some other specific spot. Some bottles left on your tongue the silex taste of their vines, others were like velvet and you knew they came from a lush green valley with plenty of moisture. Closing your eyes, you could see a certain greyish hill, with its twisted little oaks and the imprints of the boars' feet which had been found there last fall after the harvest. And later the young girls bending under the weight of their baskets full of luscious grapes. Especially, you recalled the wrinkled face of the vintner who had devoted his life to the culture of that difficult soil.

All the manifestations of life took on a profound meaning, because men had left their mark upon them. You felt that you were in the center of an immense prayer sent heavenward by all of the workers, with their plows, their hammers, their needles, or even simply their brains. Today we live in a desert of anonymity. The wines are blended. The nickel-plated tubing in my bathroom, the hardwood of my floor, the fence around my garden, all bring to mind for me only the uniform purr of the machines that turned them out.

THERE are still a few places where we can seek a refuge. A painter can still speak to us of himself in his canvases, as a chef can in his culinary creations. That is probably why we are ready to pay fortunes for a good picture or for a good meal. And then there is also this film craft of ours, which will remain one of the great expressions of human personality if we are

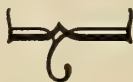


able to retain our artisans' spirit, which fortunately is still very much alive. That spirit is Chaplin's, down to the tips of his toenails. One feels it in a certain decent way he has of going into a scene, in the almost peasant-like thriftiness of his sets, in his wariness of technique for technique's sake, in his respect for the personalities of actors, and in that internal richness which makes us feel that each character just has too much to say.

*Monsieur Verdoux* will some day go into history along with the creations of artists who have contributed

to the building of our civilization. He will have his place alongside the pottery of Urbino and the paintings of the French Impressionists, between a tale by Mark Twain and a minuet by Lulli. And during that time, the films which are so highly endowed with money, with technique and with publicity, the ones that enchant his detractors, will find their way God knows where, let us say into oblivion, along with the expensive mahogany chairs mass-produced in the beautiful nickel-plated factories.

*(Mr. Renoir wrote this article in French and translated it into English with the assistance of Mr. Harold Salemsen.)*



# Writing and Realization

MEYER LEVIN

MEYER LEVIN, a member of SWG, is a novelist, film critic and foreign correspondent as well as a screen writer. His novels include *The Old Bunch* and *Citizens*. He is now living in New York.

IT takes only a few minutes to write a scene in which a runaway boy wakes up on a high rocky ledge in Palestine, to find himself surrounded by sheep, with an Arab shepherd staring at him.

But when you go to make the scene, in precisely the spot you had in mind when you wrote it, you discover that the equipment-truck can only go within a few hundred yards of the rocks because the driver does not want to risk his vehicle on a plowed field. You help lug the camera equipment the rest of the way. The shepherd who was to be there at four o'clock with the sheep is found in a meadow a mile away at four o'clock, because he says his sheep could not feed on the rocks. You push and goad the sheep but by the time they

reach the scene, the cameraman decides that the light is on the hairline of departure. There may be time for just one take. Then it is discovered that the sheep simply will not stay on the rocky ledge long enough for a take. They scramble away. Finally you make the scene without the sheep.

But it isn't what you wrote. At night, worrying about it, you suddenly realize that the scene was wrongly written. It should have been goats. So the next day you decide to try it with goats.

Although there are goatherds all over the mountain-side, there are none within four miles of this particular spot, on the day you want them. You go to Tiberius and personally lift a sufficient number of goats onto

the truck. You transport them. You help herd them up the hill. And after a few dozen major and minor crises, and hours of toil as a goatherd, Arab-pacifier, reflector-holder, and assistant cameraboy, you get the scene that was so easy to write.

The French have a word for it. They call it *realization*.

The realization of *Survivors*, in Palestine, was a six-month try to catch a dawn shot, scarcely an evening that wasn't spent desperately hunting for a character for tomorrow's scene, because the one who had been cast had been called away by his Youth Group for a "hike." Every word that was innocently typed in the script, which was written in six weeks "from scratch," later entailed laborious hours of realization. And yet, as the writer, I could not permit myself to feel that the final responsibility of realization could rest entirely with someone else.

In a studio setup, it is simple for the writer to say that what he wrote was beautiful, but that after the script departed from his hands any number of people mangled and butchered it far beyond recognition. While this is usually true, there are surely times when every writer in his soul smiles at the task he has given the producers and directors, knowing that what he has so easily written is most difficult to realize, and inwardly glad that he does not have to take the responsibility for putting it on the screen.

Conversely, and more often, the writer aches with the apprehension that what he has written cannot exactly and precisely be understood, through the words themselves; he feels that any realizer, however talented, is bound to get the atmosphere or the emphasis wrong, and knows that the only true way to make films is for the writer to be present throughout the shooting and to have at least as much control as anyone else in the realization.

Few writers ever get such an opportunity. But with the increasing trend toward story-documentary technique, stimulated by the successful experiments produced during the war, these opportunities are increasing. And when Herbert Kline and I set out to make our Palestine film, it was agreed that this was to be the method. I would assume equal production responsibility, and have equal production authority, with him. He would direct the film, but the realization had to conform to the intention of the script.

AS it worked out in practice, Kline acted as my producer while I was writing the script, I acted as his producer while he was directing the film.

It need not be imagined that this procedure is perfect, and that it always works harmoniously. Nor does

it mean that each takes responsibility for the merits of the other's work. In the end, the writing stands on its own, and the direction stands on its own. But although the French often use the word *realization* in the same way that we use the word *direction*, it reflects only their over-emphasis on the role of the director of films, for the realization in this type of film is truly the work of both, and I believe that writers may justifiably insist that it is part of their function in all film-making to have such a share in realization.

As joint producers, we decided from the beginning that in the case of severely disputed scenes, where we could arrive at no agreement as to the method of filming, we would film both versions, and decide which to use when we saw what they looked like on the screen. It became necessary to do this in only three or four instances.

To the making of *Survivors*, I brought a continuing interest in Palestine, that had begun with my first visit to the country in 1925. I had also specialized, as a war correspondent, in the story of the fate of the Jews of Europe. The film, Kline and I agreed, was to show what Palestine could do for the survivors.

Kline brought to the project his experience as a story-documentary producer, being especially known for *The Forgotten Village*. But each of us had worked in the other's field, for he had collaborated on screenwriting assignments, while I had worked as a documentary film director in OWI.

Having agreed upon the theme of the story, there followed a consideration of what had to go into the story. During all my years of contact with Palestine, I had collected "must" scenes for a film about the country. On every one of my four previous trips I had discovered some view, or some activity, which I felt must eventually go into the film. And I had, in fact, first proposed the idea of a Palestine film to Kline in Spain in 1937; we had never quite let the subject drop.

I knew, for instance, that the story must show what life was like, in a Palestine farm collective; it must include a *horra* — the settler's dance — and it must include an *aliyah* — the going up to the site of a new colony, which is collectively built in a single day. It must include an illegal landing. It must include the view of the wilderness of Judea and the Dead Sea from Jerusalem-Jericho road. It must include the view of the Emek from the Haifa road. It must of course include the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan. It had to contain a sequence that could be played on the campus of the Hebrew University, with the awesome background of the Dead Sea on one side, and the spiritual view of Jerusalem on the opposite side of Mount Scopus.

The film-story would have to make an opportunity



for a sequence in the old city of Jerusalem; it would have to make use of the complex traditions and emotions that were attached to the sights of the Via Dolorosa and of the dark lanes and huddled synagogues of the old city; it would have to show the progressive force and spirit of the new city, too.

And apart from all the physically obligatory scenes, the places that had to be in the picture because of their beauty, or their historic and spiritual connection, there were the mandatory requirements of the life in the country. Something of the cultural life had to be shown, through the city of Tel Aviv — perhaps the theatres or the symphony orchestra. Something of the industrial life of the country had to come into the story, either showing the manufacturing complex in Haifa harbor, or perhaps the diamond industry of Nathanyah, or the potash works of the Dead Sea.

And finally, the pioneering aspects of land reclamation had to come into any story of Palestine, and for this, the new drive toward settling the desert of the Negev was the obvious answer.

Plainly, there were enough "must" items for the construction of a full-length documentary film. If we could hope to get them all in, we needed a story of movement — a chase, or a search.

Usually, writers feel that the inclusion of obligatory scenes hampers them. But sometimes one feels these scenes as a challenge to invention. And since in this case most of the requirements had originated with myself, there could be no complaint.

**I**N the end, they were all solved, through the story of a boy's search for his family. The central motif of the story echoed in my mind from the story of every survivor I had met in the liberated camps and on the roads of Europe, during and immediately after the war. The first and consuming quest of each was for the remnants of his family. Indeed, I somewhat caught their obsession, and for many weeks almost dropped my work as a journalist in order to collect lists of survivors, with the names of the kin they hoped to find, and spread these lists wherever they might be useful.

One story emerged from the rest. It was the story of a little boy in Buchenwald who refused to leave the camp, when liberation came, because his father had been at the camp with him, and his father, when taken away on a work-party, had told the child "don't go away from here — wait here for me until I come back. Otherwise we will never find each other."

This became transmuted into the story of a child whose father, when being taken away with the rest of the family on a deportation train, told the child to

run and hide in the woods, "you will find us in Palestine."

The child, then, arrives in Palestine with a group landed illegally by the Hagana; from the first moment, he reveals his obsession that he will find his family in Palestine. As the group is taken, by truck, to a settlement in lower Galilee, it becomes possible, by following the truck, to disclose such views as Mount Tabor in the pre-dawn, and the Sea of Galilee in dawn.

The life of a typical settlement is revealed as the refugees begin to adjust themselves to their new home, and as the children try to befriend the boy, David. But he rebuffs them, and runs away in search of his own family.

David trades an army jack-knife for a ride on an Arab boy's donkey, and through their run-away episode we see more details of the shores of Galilee, and the life of the region. The relationship between David and the Arab boy, and between the settlement and the Arab boy's village, serves in a most natural way to illustrate the typical workaday relationships on the ground level, between Jews and Arabs.

The runaway episode is halted when the donkey gives birth to a foal; the boys are brought back home, and David is given the foal. But as it cries for its mother, he carries it back, wading across the Jordan, which is between the Jewish settlement and the Arab village. Later, it is decided at a meeting of the settlement that David shall be sent to a children's village, where he will be among other boys like himself, with a chance for special care toward adjustment.

This time in the daylight, the truck passes on the Haifa road, through the Emek, past oil refineries; it stops in Haifa, where David learns that a ship of legal immigrants is entering the port; he hopes to find someone from his family on the ship.

After his further disappointment in the port, the story progresses to the children's village; on the first night he quarrels with the boys who insist he is an orphan like all the rest of them, he has a fight, and runs away again.

Through means of this flight, it is possible to show glimpses of Arab shepherd life, and of Caesaria, and finally of the new city of Tel Aviv. Here, he is led to seek his family amongst the members of the Palestine Philharmonic orchestra, for one of the violinists bears David's family name, Halevi.

David interrupts a rehearsal, where a new Palestine folk symphony is being performed. But the violinist is not from David's country — Poland. However, someone knows of a Halevi from Poland, working at the Dead Sea potash plant.

Again, the boy's journey leads through a section of unforgettable Palestine landscape — this time as he

rides a bus down the Jericho road. He passes through the potash works, where Jews and Arabs labor side by side, and finds Yehuda Halevi; the worker pretends to be his uncle.

As the boy begins to find himself at home with the Halevis, the life of the community is felt — the Sabbath by the Dead Sea, the visit to the neighboring settlement, the chatter of Palestinian children about their vast projects for electrifying and irrigating the country.

**B**UT when David discovers that Halevi is not really his uncle, he runs away for the last time — to find the office in Jerusalem where, he has heard, there is a record of all the families that have been found. On his journey through the wilderness, he is helped by an Arab merchant, who takes the boy to Jerusalem on his camel-train. They enter by the Gate of St. Stephen. The boy becomes lost in the maze of the old city, and is helped by two priests who find him on the Via Dolorosa. They take him to his own people in the Jewish quarter. (Here, we deliberately avoided the Wailing Wall.) The boy enters a synagogue, and from there is directed to the new city.

With a troop of children masquerading for Purim, he at last finds the "office where they have the names." This Search Bureau for Missing Relatives is actually housed under an ancient ruin, between the new and old cities, and the long files of family-records, in the catacombs, provide a perfect background for the climactic moment when David discovers that his family is dead.

In his collapse, he has a reversion to infancy. He is taken to the Haddassah hospital on Mount Scopus, and there his friends from the first settlement find him. In his phase of infancy, he identifies the refugee woman who has befriended him, and the leader of the settlement Hagana, as "mama" and "papa."

This moment fuses the story of the child with the story of the refugee woman, and her problem is revealed in the following scene, which takes place on the campus of the Hebrew University, adjacent to the hospital.

The story moves on to the establishment of a new colony in the Negev by the refugees, together with a Palestinian youth group. The child is brought to the settlement.

In plowing, a stone is turned up, bearing an ancient inscription, with the name Halevi. Through this incident, the boy is brought back to reality; in this symbol, he finds his family.

The course of this story provided the inclusion of all the self-imposed obligatory scenes, and yet provided this in such a way that every setting added to the dramatic potential of the tale.

While it was the director's task to realize the scenes in terms of acting, the finding of the precise locations, and the enlistment of the people of each place for authentic background usually fell to the writer. Partly, this was due to my working knowledge of Hebrew, and partly to my long familiarity with the country and with Jewish customs. For though the film was made with English-speaking participants, the work in the entourage was usually conducted in Hebrew.

While all of Palestine was extremely excited by our film project, and more than ready to cooperate, the very intensity of interest sometimes caused difficulties. For the smallest participant wanted to be sure that our point-of-view was acceptable, and every scene was scrupulously investigated. As the population is intelligent and hyper-sensitive, this often led to delays and to discussions and explanations which would seem tryingly protracted under ordinary circumstances. In addition to allaying the suspicion of the political groups, and of the Arabs, there were difficulties of tradition to overcome.

My script for instance envisaged a scene in a synagogue in the Old City. Now, almost all orthodox Jews consider photography as forbidden under the command not to make graven images. How could one "realize" such a scene?

I found the leader of the old-city community, and got him to show me an ancient, beautiful little synagogue behind his own house. It was named, he told me, the Ohr Chayim — the Living Light. It so happens that I wrote a book of Chassidic tales some years ago, and knew that the Ohr Chayim was one of the great rabbis of that mystical sect.

This communion of information, coming from an unorthodox American Jew, was the opening point. We discussed Chassidism for hours. And finally we were permitted to film our scene in the holiest of Old City synagogues.

**I**N the completed film there are of course many things which I feel might have been different, and many things which the director feels might have been different, had there been fewer practical difficulties — such as the curfew, which usually struck just as we had finished three hours of preparations and were ready to film. But these are the limitations of the method of shooting in live locations; in return, you get the quality of life.

As a writer, I believe the labor I put in for six months, after the six weeks I spent in writing the script, was necessary for the fulfillment of an author's responsible share in the realization of this type of film. The goats are among the rocks — even if I had to carry them there myself.



THE MOTION-PICTURE SCREEN IS AN INSTRUMENT OF ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION. HAVING BEEN PIONEERED AND DEVELOPED IN OUR COUNTRY, IT IS PECULIARLY AMERICAN. ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE AND TO INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS HAS BEEN ENORMOUS. THE MOTION-PICTURE INDUSTRY HAS ALWAYS BEEN PERMITTED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. THE IMPRESSION HAS NOW ARISEN, AND VERY NATURALLY, THAT ONE OF THE HOPED FOR RESULTS OF THE PRESSURE OF YOUR INVESTIGATION WILL BE TO INFLUENCE THE INDUSTRY TO ALTER ITS POLICIES SO THAT THEY MAY ACCORD MORE DIRECTLY WITH THE VIEWS OF (ITS CRITICS). THE INDUSTRY IS PREPARED TO RESIST SUCH PRESSURE WITH ALL OF THE STRENGTH AT ITS COMMAND.

— *A statement by Wendell Willkie  
on the occasion of the 1941 Senate in-  
vestigation of the motion picture in-  
dustry.*

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# *The Freedom of the Screen*

*This special section of THE SCREEN WRITER has been prepared to give all who are concerned with films a report and analysis of activity both in the industry and in government which may affect the integrity of motion pictures as a free medium.*

## Foreword

THE trade press and journals of public opinion throughout the nation recently have insinuated that a crisis is looming in the motion picture industry — a crisis due to foreign competition.

Since the beginning of this year reviewers and audiences alike have thrown their critical hats high in the air in praise of *Brief Encounter*, *This Happy Breed*, *Odd Man Out*, and *Great Expectations*. The last mentioned film was introduced to New York at the Radio City Music Hall — an indication that the days of the “artistic” British film with no box office appeal are indeed over. There are rumors of excellent films being made in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Russia,

films which American audiences may well prefer when it comes to box office appeal.

More important is the fact that as these countries produce films of the calibre of *Great Expectations*, *The Open City*, and *Children of Paradise*, the citizens of those countries will naturally prefer to see their own excellent product rather than to see ours.

But, as Mr. Johnston has told us, a tremendous percentage of gross receipts come from our foreign markets. If our foreign markets decrease to an alarming extent, then there will be a crisis indeed.

There are but two methods by which we can show

our films abroad with the assurance that money will flow in from European audiences:

- 1 — We can compete on a level of content; filming adult and truthful stories with the unsurpassed technical experience that is ours.
- 2 — We can take advantage of our unrivaled distributing resources, our past popularity and our great economic strength as a creditor nation, and, with the help of Washington, force our films into the movie houses of the world through implied threats of "no loans unless."

Which course are we taking? Are we picking this second choice — the "dollar as a weapon" method?

If, however, we are to choose the first method of retaining prestige, then certain other questions must be raised. Is the content of American films being limited? Are there forces attempting to keep the screen from illuminating all truthful aspects of present American life? Is content becoming an instrument for political policy?

In other words — what of Freedom of the Screen?

Freedom of the Screen means exactly what the phrase says. It has no ambiguity. It means the same rights that have always been enjoyed by the book publishers, the theatre and allied arts — bound by the laws of common decency and majority consent.

Whether or not this freedom is going to be enjoyed is a question being argued by almost all who work in our industry today.

This question was first projected on the screen of the average writer's mind by Mr. Eric Johnston's visit in March to the studios. Then the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities, led by J. Parnell Thomas, came to town. Almost simultaneously Dr. John Lechner of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals leapt to a platform and implying that the Thomas Committee was his authority, denounced the following pictures as containing "Communistic and subversive propaganda": *Margie*, *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, *Boomerang*, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Medal For Benny*, *Watch on the Rhine*, *The Searching Wind*, *Pride of the Marines*, *North Star* and *Mission to Moscow*.

Dr. Lechner is no longer with the MPAFTPOAL.

Miss Katharine Hepburn, the distinguished motion picture actress, in a speech, was convinced that Freedom of the Screen was being throttled. The officers of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals advertised to the contrary. And so the points of view shuttle back and forth and the issue grows.

The questions raised here are of deep concern not only to the members of the industry, but to the motion picture public as a whole.

To stimulate discussion in the hope of finding the truth as to whether Freedom of the Screen is being threatened, THE SCREEN WRITER presents the following special section of this issue and invites comment from its readers.

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*I say discuss all and expose all. I am for every topic openly.  
I say there can be no safety for these states without innovation, without free tongues  
and ears willing to hear the tongues.*

— WALT WHITMAN

## A Short History of Film Censorship

MARTIN FIELD

THE history of censorship of the screen goes back to 1909, when, because of the alleged character of the films being shown in New York City, the mayor closed the theatres. In a successful move to get their theatres reopened, the exhibitors secured the formation of the National Board of Censorship to inspect films before their release to the public. The member-

ship of the Board included representatives of civic, social, and religious agencies. In 1914, the National Board of Censorship discreetly changed its name to the National Board of Review, which still functions.

Despite this form of voluntary censorship, several states enacted censorship statutes. Pennsylvania was the first, in 1911, and Ohio and Kansas followed suit in 1913. Maryland adopted legalized censorship in 1916, New York and Florida in 1921, and Virginia in 1922.

It was in 1922 that the worst storm in Hollywood's history broke over the town's head. Motion picture

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MARTIN FIELD, a member of the Editorial Committee of THE SCREEN WRITER, is a frequent contributor to this and other magazines. As a screen writer and playwright he has had extensive experience in Hollywood and New York.



producers, trying to buck the postwar "recession," found that sex is, as Eric Johnston terms it, "interesting" and, even more important, profitable at the box office. A few men, working on the age-old theory that you can't have too much of a good fling, produced some rather salacious items. As if this were not enough, a series of scandals involving Hollywood personalities was trumpeted in the nation's press, notably the Fatty Arbuckle case. While no question arose about censoring the newspapers that sensationalized the Arbuckle case and others to the tune of accelerated newsstand sales, there was a loud outcry for Federal censorship of the screen. A bill to that effect almost succeeded in coming to a vote.

Dozens of national civic organizations of women, teachers and religious denominations added to the clamor. There was the prospect that some 22 censorship bills would become law.

The producers, genuinely frightened by this threat to their industry's welfare, looked about frantically for the right gimmick that would solve their problem. The inspired gimmick proved to be Will H. Hays, chairman of the Republican National Committee and Postmaster General of the Harding regime then in office.

Will Hays proved his worth. As head of the newly-formed Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, he contacted all the organizations which had been denouncing the industry and got from them a six-month reprieve on the promise that he would clean house in the industry. Within that time he organized a division of the Hays Office to act as the industry's own censor board, stating that "none could deny that the lusty infant which was the movies had by 1922 transgressed some of the religious, ethical, and social mores upon which our society is built." By 1929, the MPPDA was cooperating with 326 national, civic, religious, educational and welfare groups and Will Hays could proudly cite as past history the "constant threats of investigation, legislation and litigation (that) afflicted the industry."

With Will Hays and 326 organizations of varying standards of acceptability ruling the screen, there flourished the game known as "getting past the Hays Office." Morris L. Ernst, an authority on censorship, tells a revealing story: "The play *Rain* held the stage in New York and the towns on the roads for several years without shaking the foundations of Church and State, but Will Hays for a time prohibited its adaptation for the movies. There is a tale that his consent was subsequently secured by guile when Gloria Swanson, seated next to him at a luncheon, sweetly asked if she might do a series of short stories by one Somerset Maugham called *The Trembling of a Leaf*, among which was a

certain one called *Miss Thompson*." And from time to time, Mr. Hays could be induced to permit titillating title changes, such as reducing *Madame Du Barry* to *Passion* and transforming *The Admirable Crichton* into a suggestive *Male and Female*.

As a result of the fresh problems created by the advent of talking motion pictures, the "Code to Govern the Making of Pictures" was devised in 1930 to regulate the depiction of crime, drinking, sex and other such "interesting" subjects.

## 2

MEANWHILE, apparently unimpressed by Mr. Hays' guarantees of purity on the screen through self-regulation, the Boards of Censorship set up in the seven states (Florida, knocked out by a legal technicality, was replaced by Massachusetts) continued to function according to their separate dictates of taste and morality. Nor did the rule of the Hays Office affect the more than 50 local censor boards operating from Atlanta to Memphis to Pasadena.

In the opinion of authorities on the state censor boards, Pennsylvania imposes the severest restrictions and Ohio is believed to be second. Choosing an average year, 1939, here are some typical State Censor Board activities: Kansas banned *Yes, My Darling Daughter* (Warner Bros.) until one line of dialogue was deleted. *Miracle Man on Main Street* (Columbia) had deleted, "Stranger, anything might happen after we've had a couple of drinks." From the reissue of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Universal) the Kansas censors eliminated "scene of professor being paddled by boys, where his figure shows." Maryland deleted scenes or dialogue or both from *Mutiny on the Bounty* (MGM), *Blackwell's Island* (WB), *Winter Carnival* (Wanger), *Charlie McCarthy, Detective* (Universal). Maryland rejected *Hitler, Beast of Berlin* (Producers Pictures Corp.) until the producers agreed to change of title to *Beasts of Berlin*, and elimination of Gestapo officers hitting bartender, "We don't bother about God — Hitler takes good care of us," an officer grabbing a priest by the collar before disrobing him.

Massachusetts, which exercises censorship through its Department of Public Safety, deleted from *Man Without a Country* (WB) the key dialogue, "Damn the United States." All scenes showing rioting in a Paramount newsreel were eliminated. *Hitler — Beast of Berlin* was changed to *Goose Step* and approved with eliminations, such as scene of Storm Troopers stepping on cross.

New York banned such films as *Ecstasy* (Eureka Productions), *Orange* (Inter-Allied), *Dick Tracy Returns* (Republic).

Pennsylvania banned *Life of a Gorilla* (Jewel), *Ecstasy* (Eureka), *Birth of a Baby* (American Committee).

The conflicting views of Censor Boards reflect the viewpoints of individuals comprising those boards. A lawyer on a censor board objected to all films depicting crooked or unethical lawyers. Some censors accepted women smoking and some did not. If a man was in the men's underwear business, he understandably objected to a scene showing Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night* going through life without the protection of an undershirt.

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THEN, in 1933, a new storm broke over Hollywood. Despite the zealous operation of the Hays Code, the early 1930's saw a flood of realistic films portraying crime and sex in rather frank terms. Again, as in 1922, it was the hypo the producers needed to bolster the sagging depression box office.

In October of that year, the Most Reverend Giovanni Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, issued a challenge to the Catholics of this country to combat "immoral" pictures. The following month the National Legion of Decency was formed to classify "films in terms of Christian morality." Since the Legion's ratings of pictures are distributed to the Catholics of Latin America as well as the United States, when a picture is deemed objectionable the producer will all but hand the cutting shears to the Legion and let it snip where it may. Of a total of 429 feature pictures reviewed from November 1943 to November 1944, the Legion deemed 51 films objectionable and three pictures were condemned *in toto*.

While a host of other organized pressure groups, such as P.T.A. groups and church groups, wage indi-

vidual campaigns against films, none of them is organized as potently as the Legion of Decency.

When Pearl Harbor forced war upon the United States the advisability of censorship because of national security was accepted unanimously. Yet despite the emergency, President Roosevelt recognized freedom of the screen when he took the time to state on December 18, 1941: "I want no censorship of the motion picture; I want no restrictions placed thereon which will impair the usefulness of the film other than those very necessary restrictions which the dictates of safety make imperative."

The wartime Office of Censorship passed on all completed product until it was closed at the cessation of hostilities. Some students of the film maintain that the exigencies of war made possible the production of pictures which would not ordinarily be produced, pictures that remain a contribution to the advancement of the screen medium.

Since the war, there have been only two outstanding censorship battles. One was over *The Outlaw*, which still plays, outside the Code, to packed houses. The other was *Duel in the Sun*, which was condemned by the Legion of Decency.

Eric Johnston, who replaced Will Hays as head of the producers association (renamed Motion Picture Association of America), shifted the headquarters of the association to Washington. Questioned on *Duel in the Sun*, Mr. Johnston admits that this is one picture he does not care to discuss. In the absence of any definite statement from Johnston, there is an impression that the six million dollars invested in the picture and the weight of high industry officialdom behind it, secured for it a clean bill of health after it had been condemned by the Legion of Decency.

So far, with Mr. Johnston at the helm in Washington instead of Mr. Hays in Hollywood, there has been no actual interference with the choice of material or theme for a motion picture.

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*It is better to guard speech than to guard wealth.*

— LUCIAN

*I should think it my duty, if required, to go to the utmost part of the land where my service could be of any use in assisting to quench the flame of prosecutions upon information, set on foot by the Government, to deprive a people of the right of remonstrating and complaining of the arbitrary attempts of men in power.*

— PETER ZENGER



## Mr. Eric Johnston's Tour

*During Mid-March, Mr. Eric Johnston, President of the Motion Picture Producers of America, came to each major studio, lunched, then spoke to invited writers, directors and producers concerning problems he felt were facing the industry.*

*In response to inquiries by many writers concerning this tour, THE SCREEN WRITER, from reports submitted to it by members of Mr. Johnston's audiences at these occasions, herewith gives below an abstract of his remarks:*

### PARAMOUNT STUDIOS:

MR. Eric Johnston opened with the statement that in his opinion, the most significant results of World War I and II were the rise and consolidation of the Soviet Union after 1918 and the emergence of the United States as the most powerful country in the world after 1945.

He then spent some moments tracing the basic historic difference between the American and Soviet ideologies. In the 18th century, the United States gave to the world the concept of the Rights of Man; in the 19th and 20th centuries, our genius for mass production improved man's material comfort and well-being. In contrast, Mr. Johnston continued, the ideas emanating from the Soviet Union are little more than medieval tyranny disguised in slogans of freedom for the masses of working people.

Mr. Johnston then discussed at length President Truman's declaration of a new foreign policy, particularly on behalf of the peoples of Greece and Turkey and their government, and how, because of this important diplomatic development, a responsibility was placed on all Americans and particularly those in the motion picture industry.

He spoke of the great threat that a loss of foreign markets would mean to writers, directors and producers. However, he assured those present, cordial relations and mutual understanding exist between the film industry and the State Department. He emphasized that the State Department was bending every effort to keep the foreign outlets open to American pictures. He made the point that when in Washington, he is "in and out of the State Department every day."

The political section of his speech ended, Mr. Johnston now spoke of the threat of more rigid censorship

in many states. To ward off this danger, he continued, there must be less drinking shown in films. Sixty-seven percent of the features produced last year had shown drinking of alcoholic beverages. Mr. Johnston decried giving to foreign audiences the impression that we are a drinking nation.

During the question period, Mr. Charles Brackett stated that under the Code, a picture like *Welldigger's Daughter* could never be made in Hollywood, and asked Mr. Johnson to speak on this point.

Mr. Johnston said that Mr. Breen, who was present, was in a better position to answer the question. Mr. Breen turned to an assistant and asked him to answer it. The assistant stated that he had seen the *Welldigger's Daughter* and "I was so bored with it that I walked out in the middle."

### R.K.O. STUDIOS:

MR. Johnston's approach was frank and his tone intimate.

He began his remarks by clearly emphasizing that the writers and producers present were considered by him as members of a business organization directly interested in the public relations and marketing problems of the industry.

Mr. Johnston divided his remarks into two separate and distinct parts — political and artistic.

In his political section, he pointed out that at one time the United Nations was a good idea and "we had high hopes for it." The loans to Turkey and Greece marked, in his opinion, the beginning of a new era in United States diplomacy. He told his listeners that after discussions with Secretary of State Marshall, Senator Vandenberg and others, it was his understanding that there was now initiated an official policy of a world-wide countering of Soviet expansion and emphasized that this policy should be supported in American motion pictures.

Mr. Johnston spoke of the United States being the strongest and richest nation in the world. He added that we must bring the benefits of our country's industrial proficiency and its way of life to less fortunate countries of the world.

He then pointed out that these new diplomatic developments directly affected the motion picture industry. He again emphasized that the personnel in the motion

picture industry would be expected to play a part in implementing this State Department policy.

To present the best in the American way of life would be one of the jobs of the industry. During these remarks on how best the industry could hold a mirror up to this way of life, Mr. Johnston criticized the excessive routine drinking in recent pictures.

In the second part of his speech — the aesthetics of movie-making — Mr. Johnston stressed motion pictures as a product for a mass market. "It is all right for a starving artist to paint a nude and get it hung in the Louvre," he continued. He then said that "adult" pictures were praiseworthy but that there was a difference between an "adult" market and a "mass" market.

On this emphasis, Mr. Johnston concluded his formal remarks.

#### WARNER BROTHERS' STUDIO:

**B**OTH Mr. Eric Johnston and Mr. Joseph Breen, in charge of administering the Code, were present. The burden of Mr. Johnston's remarks was that the United States "is not a drinking country." He cited statistics to prove that in large sections of what he described as "rural Protestant America," prohibition is a consummation devoutly to be wished, and the frequent appearance of stimulants on motion picture screens was not approved.

Mr. Johnston now spoke of the vast industrial potential of the United States. He compared the economic and industrial power of this country with backward countries in Latin and South America and gave as one illustration of the disparity, the non-use of water power below the Rio Grande.

In response to a question asked him by a producer, Mr. Johnston remarked: "I'm just here to tell you what the American people think. I am merely a messenger from the American people."

Mr. Harry Warner asked Mr. Johnston concerning *Duel in the Sun*. Mr. Johnston gave the floor to Mr. Breen. Mr. Warner asked how the Breen Office could have allowed the showing of *Duel*. Mr. Breen explained that the picture had not been judged for censorship all in one piece, but by snatches. From this point on, the discussion veered towards a personal exchange between Mr. Harry Warner and Mr. Breen.

*During his appearances at Universal-International, Twentieth-Century Fox and M.G.M., Mr. Johnston is reported as having repeated what he had said at the above studios without significant variations. For this reason, THE SCREEN WRITER is not abstracting his remarks at these three studios.*

*However, some time later, on June 3rd, Mr. John-*

*ston, having been asked many times to meet with the members of the Screen Writers' Guild and talk to them informally, accepted the long-extended invitation and spoke at Lucey's. Herewith is an abstract of his remarks:*

**M**R. Johnston admitted that there were areas of disagreement between him and the Screen Writers' Guild, but emphasized that discussion of divergent opinions often yields the truth. He stated that his best friends had warned him not to appear before the Screen Writers' Guild, but he was not heeding that warning.

Mr. Johnston spoke of his belief in capitalism as having done more for more people than any other system in the world. He advocated strong democratic guilds and unions as a way to make capitalism work. He stated that he was for the liberties of the individual. In emphasizing what he stood against, Mr. Johnston described American Communists as treasonable and subversive.

In regard to the future of the motion picture industry, Mr. Johnston divided his remarks into two topics — the foreign market and the domestic market. Speaking of the foreign market, he stressed that most of the net income in the past years has come from outside the United States. He admitted that at present we are taking serious losses. He categorized the foreign problems all over the world: exchange restrictions, embargoes, bans against American films because certain countries "do not like something in them." He explained how, because of these foreign problems, he had to be in almost constant contact with the President, his Cabinet and leaders of the House and Senate. These meetings were important in order to stimulate the development of films abroad.

Because a very great potential of the peoples of the world has not yet seen a motion picture, the Association is promoting 16 mm films to be shown in out of the way places such as Iran, etc. In this way, markets will be opened of millions of people who will see American pictures.

Mr. Johnston stressed that these methods of awakening millions of people over the world to the habit of seeing American films directly concerned the screenwriters, since the monies obtained from such foreign markets represented jobs and salaries to the writers.

In relation to the domestic market, the speaker told of several ideas the Association had under way. One of these was the formation of a Motion Picture Institute in which the entire personnel of the industry would be joined to consider questions of interest to motion-picture makers. Unfortunately, until the anti-Trust suits were over, this would still be only an idea.

A second project in the offing is the series of films



called *This Is Hollywood*, produced in the hopes of showing Hollywood in its human aspects rather than its sensational ones.

"If children form the habit of going to motion pictures, maybe they will go when they grow up," said Mr. Johnston. In order to stimulate the interest of the young, the Association is spending \$150,000 on visual education for teaching aids in schools.

In answer to a question concerning the Un-American Committee, Mr. Johnston stated: "From now on we will insist on names and facts and we want this investigation to end all investigations as far as Hollywood is concerned." He explained that in order to assure a

fair trial of Hollywood, the Association had employed Mr. James Byrnes to assist the industry.

In answer to the question of injecting subversive propaganda into pictures, Mr. Johnson replied: "We want a free screen, free from government pressure or subversive propaganda."

In answer to a question as to whether the Motion Picture Association has any long-range policy about committees such as the Un-American Committee, Mr. Johnston answered: "The philosophy of any industry has little effect on Congress. The ballot box is what counts. The industry of course wants to avoid such hearings because of the possible result of federal control."

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*"Then you would say what you mean," the March Hare went on.*

*"I do," Alice hastily replied. "At least — at least, I mean what I say — that's the same thing, you know."*

*"Not the same thing a bit," said the Hatter.*

— LEWIS CARROLL

## What of the Foreign Market?

VLADIMIR POZNER

I HAVE never been able to find out whether ostriches actually hide their heads in the sand of the desert.

In Hollywood they do. As a matter of fact, it seems to be their favorite posture when it comes to discussing problems of motion pictures.

The discussions have been particularly lively since the Thomas Committee put Hollywood on the map of Russia. Lately they have taken the form of advice, and even directives, generally aimed at writers — a some-

what belated but none the less gratifying kind of recognition for our craft.

We were told that to the old and self-evident truth — "movies are your best entertainment," something new has been added: the movies must sell the American Way to the world, said Way being the Main Street of a small Mid-western town, which in turn goes to show what capitalism and free enterprise will do for you if you let the law of supply and demand work unhampered — as any returned veteran among the screen writers will tell you.

Thus the ideal picture of the future should be a combination of *Anchors Aweigh* and *Behind the Iron*

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SWG member Vladimir Pozner is the well-known novelist and screen writer. A member of the French *Syndicat des Scenaristes*, he has recently spent much time in Europe, where he has had experience as a film salesman, writer and producer.

*Danube.* A new slogan is in the making: "The motion picture is your best singing commercial."

I have a great respect and sincere admiration for Main Street, whether or not it runs parallel to the railway tracks, and won't raise the question which side of the latter we are asked to describe in our films. However, since the word "commercial" has been mentioned, I cannot help wondering.

We have been told many a time that the motion picture industry derives close to fifty percent of its income from the foreign markets. In other words, the profits of the motion picture companies are conditioned to a large extent by the response of a world-wide audience. Consequently, we must avoid any insulting or disparaging remarks about any country, and, above all, stay away from all controversial subjects, such as color, race, creed, politics, adultery, pregnancy, suicide, etc.

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NOW, the American Way, as defined above, may not seem controversial on Main Street of Paris, Kentucky, but it certainly is in Paris, France — whether one likes it or not. Speaking of free enterprise, for instance, it is well to remember that basic industries have been or are being nationalized in Great Britain and France, not to mention points East. Or, to choose another example, one may point out that the word "Red" has a different connotation in the United States and the rest of the world — with a few excep-

tions. Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries have Socialist Governments, in France and Italy the Communists are the strongest political party.

The lawmakers and ministers of other countries are less important, however, from our viewpoint, than the millions of foreign professional people, industrial and white-collar workers, farmers, students, shopkeepers, housewives, etc., who voted for those lawmakers and ministers, because these millions represent the majority of moviegoers the world over. Six years of war and what they still call fascism, made them acutely aware of social and political problems. They may be wrong or right, but, right or wrong, they are not likely to pay admission in order to listen to theories or content, no matter how carefully dressed, which they have rejected at the polls. After all they do not *have* to go to the movies. In France for instance they did not — under Nazi occupation. Today they would not even have to sacrifice going to the movies; they can choose between the product of different European countries, which they could not then.

I do not mean to say that Hollywood should stick to its old policy of total non-intervention in life. Nor do I know what would be the combined income from operations in Argentine, Spain, Turkey, and Greece. I am merely raising a question which, I am afraid, must be answered, lest the Hollywood ostrich finds itself in a near future with a lot of headaches, a tremendous overhead — and no head.

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## The Un-American Way

Show business knows too well the ways of publicity to gaze with other than a cold eye upon the Hollywood investigation by Congress' Un-American Activities Committee. The newspapers also are aware of the score, but when they can fit "Hollywood Red Probe" into a page one head it means circulation.

It blows up into quite a bawl of yarn which, nevertheless, is neither a yard wide nor has it much wool. That's because the Un-American Committee won't lay it on the line by mentioning names.

They say the picture business is full of Reds on the Hollywood end. Well, name 'em. There isn't a studio that won't help chase subversive elements off its lot. Yet all this has been said again and again, hashed over again and again. That "again and again." It has a familiar refrain. Are they going to blame pictures on him too?

But accusations as to Reds and Roosevelt are not the burnup. It's when they claim that Hollywood has turned out pictures detrimental to this Government.

Smile when you say that, Mister, or name names.

Name the picture. Name the sequence. Name the scene.

Put up or shut up.

It's time.

— *N. Y. Variety*, June 4, 1947.



## Symposium on a Question Asked

*The Screen Writer sent to more than thirty figures prominent in the motion picture industry — writers, producers, directors, critics, newspaper publishers etc. — the following telegram:*

BECAUSE OF THE VAST PUBLIC INTEREST INSPIRED BY CURRENT INVESTIGATIONS OF THE MOTION PICTURES AND THE CHARGES MADE THEREUNDER, WOULD YOU PLEASE STATE, IN 300 WORDS OR MORE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS, YOUR OPINION OR ATTITUDE ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS: "DO YOU THINK THAT RECENT FILMS CONTAIN SUBVERSIVE MATERIAL, IMMORAL CONTENT AND UN-AMERICAN DOCTRINES AS CHARGED? DO YOU FEEL THAT FURTHER OUTSIDE CENSORSHIP IS NEEDED TO 'CLEAN UP THE INDUSTRY'?" IF YOU DO NOT CARE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS DIRECTLY, WE ARE CERTAIN THE MEMBERS OF THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD WOULD WELCOME ANY GENERAL VIEWS YOU MAY HOLD ON THIS ESSENTIAL MATTER.

Of the more than thirty wires sent out, the following replies have been received:

*EMMET LAVERY, President of SWG:*

If the nation is in immediate peril from Communist activity in Hollywood as Congressman Thomas would have the country believe, it is difficult to understand how the Congressman and his Committee can adjourn the peril so glibly — how he can lay it down so blandly in June and prepare to pick it up again, on schedule, in September.

From this distance it looks more like a show that is laying off for the summer.

I hold no brief for Marxian Communism, but I do hold a brief for the American theory of due process. If Mr. Thomas has any proof of seditious activity anywhere, let him take his case at once to the FBI and let indictment in the Federal Courts follow. If Mr. Thomas has no proof — but is merely conducting an *ex parte* witch hunt in the newspapers of the country — he is merely giving us a sample of what truly Un-American activity can be.

I say this with no disrespect to Congress. I make it as a personal observation on the strange behavior of Congressman Thomas. He hasn't changed very much since the days of the Dies Committee, and his extraordinary method of inquisition is a sad subversion of the power which has been entrusted to Congressional committees.

*BOSLEY CROWTHER, Motion Picture Editor of the New York Times:*

To my mind, the imputation that there has been "subversive" or "un-American" doctrine circulated in Hollywood films is reckless and ridiculous. Anyone who follows even casually the nature of American films knows that their standard myths and concepts are anything in the book but "Communist."

However, I do feel that endeavors have willfully and greedily been made to slip into many Hollywood picture as much salacity and suggestion as possible. I also feel that a disturbing trend towards stories of vice and depravity has been manifest in recent pictures. And this bothers me very much.

For it is my considered opinion that the surest way to corrupt the minds and feelings of human beings is to feed and stimulate their baser appetites. This is being done, to my mind, by many of Hollywood's current films.

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*ELIA KAZAN, Motion Picture Director:*

I certainly do not think that films like *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Boomerang*, *Margie*, etc. contain subversive material unless "subversive" is defined as anything that criticizes any aspect of American life whatsoever. In fact, the pointing to these pictures as "subversive" gave me one of the best laughs I've had in a long time.

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*ARCHER WINSTEN, Motion Picture Editor of the New York Post:*

Let me state parenthetically before answering your question that we in New York now have before us five British films, *Odd Man Out*, *Great Expectations*, *This Happy Breed*, *Brief Encounter*, and *The Captive Heart*, the Swedish *Torment*, the Italian *Open City*, and the French *The Well-Digger's Daughter*. Current American competition to these is composed of *Duel In The Sun*, *The Strange Woman*, *The Other Love*, *The Imperfect Lady*, *Dishonored Lady*, *Carnegie Hall*, *Honeymoon*, *The Two Mrs. Carrrolls*, *The Brasher Doubloon*, *The Sea of Grass*, *Nora Prentiss* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Only the last named picture

can compete with the foreign ones. It can be omitted from my blanket indictment.

To answer your question: YES, I do think these recent American films are subversive, immoral and un-American.

They are subversive in the sense that vulgar, simple-minded sensationalism is well calculated to overturn the long dominance of American films not only in the world market but also at home.

They are immoral in their tricky adherence to a Production Code and their flouting of any truthful statement of life's problems.

They are un-American in their crass, commercial distortion of the values and lack of values in this country.

Needless to say, censorship, having already botched its job, can only make matters worse if extended further.

As for the more specific, communist charges to which your questions must refer, they are sufficiently laughable to rate a "boff" as low burlesque. That Robert Taylor could think he was spouting propaganda in *Song of Russia* is in itself an hilarious comment on the well-known power of analysis of our popular face-makers. Even *North Star*, Goldwyn's effort to be nice to Russia, was 99.44 percent pure Hollywood.

I would say that if Hollywood knuckles under to this further attempt to frighten its scared millionaires into deeper retreat from consideration of ideas as such, the comparative values of social systems, the criticism of our less than perfect system, and the honest presentation of anything that freedom of thought should rightly feed upon, it will deserve the oblivion for which it has been heading these past two years.

As a critic I would like nothing better than to see great pictures pouring out of Hollywood. I'm sure the writers represented by The Screen Writers' Guild share that view and could do much to make it come true if they were given a chance.

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**DORE' SCHARY**, *Production Head of RKO*:

(*William Mooring, film critic of the Tidings, official organ of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, characterized Mr. Schary's recent film THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER as communistic. Mr. Schary's reply to this critic has been given by him to The Screen Writer as his answer to our telegram*):

The review, to me, is curious and odd on a basis of logic. Mr. Mooring says the heavies in the film are Fascist and that, therefore, their opponent is a Communist. This reasoning would make every one who has opposed fascism a Communist, including Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Truman, Stassen and fourteen million soldiers. It is impossible for any convinced liberal to avoid temporary agreement with leftists on some subjects and with rightists on others. But liberals must not, therefore, be intimidated or frightened into abandoning their principles. If one says that Hollywood is communistic because of such pictures as *Mission to Moscow* and *Song of Russia*, it is equally logical to say that Hollywood is monarchistic because of *Mrs. Miniver*.

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**FREDA KIRCHWEY**, *Editor of The Nation*:

As far as my own experience goes do not believe films have been subversive, immoral or un-American. Do not believe in censorship. Must admit that my attendance at films is limited.

## Memo to J. Parnell Thomas

MORRIS E. COHN

THE Thomas Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities is the successor of a line of somewhat similar committees extending back to 1919. Shortly after the revolution in Russia a meeting was held in a theatre in Washington, D. C., apparently in the nature of a public forum, to discuss the merits and the dangers of the new form of government. Some of the newspaper reports indicated no more than a

temperate examination of the new government; other newspapers treated the situation as inflammatory, and as a result, almost immediately, there was set up a Senate committee to investigate bolshevism in America. From that time until 1940 there have been un-American committees; the committee is now a standing committee of the House.

The motion picture industry is an immediate subject for investigation by this committee, and the Screen Writers Guild has been marked for special attention. It seems an appropriate time therefore to examine this

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MORRIS E. COHN is counsel for the Screen Writers' Guild and has published many studies of legal problems affecting writers and the motion picture industry.



servant of the people, the Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities.

The Committee is an agency of one of the legislative branches of our government. Its powers and purposes stem from the body which created it and cannot rise higher than the source of its being. Although it is a justifiable figure of speech to speak of a trial by this Committee, it is important to understand that the Committee has no judicial powers; that is to say, *the Committee has no power to try anybody or to render a judgment, in the formal sense.* The figure of speech is however justified because the conduct of this Committee often entails consequences as important in the life of the individual concerned as any judgment of a court.

The Committee's powers derive from the legislative function of Congress. The legislative function includes the power to make laws; but it is not limited to that power. How far it goes beyond the power to make laws has not been determined by our highest courts. However students of constitutional government speak of "the informing power" as appropriate to Congress. By this they mean publicity, turning public attention to information. And Martin Dies has subscribed publicly to that theory. He said, in substance, that there was a large range of subject matter about which Congress could make no law but which was within the province of investigating committees; by turning public attention to danger spots these committees could nevertheless accomplish a great deal. Notwithstanding the approval of the informing power by such students of government as Woodrow Wilson and Dr. Marshall Dimock, it seems at odds with the conception of a government of limited powers, of a government of laws rather than of men. If Congress should possess a power not granted or limited by the Constitution, that power would be unlimited, to be used as an individual incumbent chose. I do not think that the suggested power could withstand judicial test.

Corollary to the power to make laws is the power to learn the facts. A legislator cannot write laws in the dark. Most investigating committees have, on the whole, confined themselves to the task of learning the facts necessary to indicate to Congress the direction which legislation should take.

Opinion concerning the value of investigating committees has been strongly divided. There are those, entitled to great respect, who argue that the use of the committees is wholly unjustified, because the evidence extracted by compulsion is small in comparison with the injuries suffered by the individuals who were brought to testify. Most of those who argue in favor of the power substantiate their position by pointing out that Congress is more directly representative of the people; and that it is essential to give the people's repre-

sentatives supervisory power over the government; that without the right to investigate into the post office, the navy, the attorney general's office, and the like, ultimate power would be splintered.

It is worth pointing out that one may concede the fact that the right to investigate governmental departments, government officials, and even government employees, is indispensable, without necessarily conceding the power to investigate a private citizen wholly unattached to any agency of the government. Since the Committee has no power to try the witness, and since grand juries exist everywhere for the ferreting out of possible crime, it might be possible to safeguard the powers which are regarded as indispensable without unnecessary injury to the private citizen. Still it is probably well in the main to accept a congressional determination as to *who* shall be investigated so long as the *subject matter* of investigation does not violate constitutional standards.

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**A**PART from criticism of investigating committees in general, there are difficulties about the Un-American Committee which deserve special attention.

First of all its scope, to investigate un-American activities. Congress has never defined the term; our courts have never defined the term; in one lower district court one judge said he could not define the word. In his first report to Congress in 1938 or 1939, Martin Dies defined the term un-American as including, among other things, the following: class intolerance; racial intolerance; religious intolerance; any philosophy which embraced all or an essential part of communism; and all violence or lawlessness.

No one would of course care to challenge the statement that lawlessness is un-American; but to accept it as part of the organic document of a Congressional committee does give the committee rather wide powers. Subsequent committees have suggested definitions of un-Americanism as ranging from social and economic equality to criticism of Chiang Kai Shek. Failure to answer a question put by a committee is a crime if the question is within the scope of the committee's power. It is a grave demand on the witness's acuity to determine when his silence may be criminal.

Of greater interest to writers than most objections to this Committee is the fact that the subject matter of investigation is the area of thinking, opinion, belief and conviction. It is believed that this marked a new venture for our government. The field of conduct, what a man does, is admittedly a proper scope for the exercise of governmental powers. But to invade the domain of the mind, what a man thinks, is a wholly different matter. The last citadel of individualism, the one place

in which the individual has found sanctuary is now invaded with the trappings of officialdom, the trumpets of press releases, flashbulbs, cameras, and the shadow of prison.

Ever since the ascendancy of temporal power over spiritual, when the church relinquished political power to the state, the privacy of a man's convictions have been entitled to be respected. Defeated, angered, embittered with the world he could seek the comfort of criticism, condemnation, all within his own mind. He could express the criticism if he chose, but he need not. If he was one of a slender minority, he might well defer expression, or at least select the time and occasion for saying what he thought.

Another subject worth attention is the lack of the ordinary immunities of witnesses. While it is true that there is a statute saying in effect that no person shall be prosecuted on evidence given in a Congressional investigation, it is questionable whether this is the equivalent of the privilege against self-incrimination guaranteed by the Constitution.

England has a Witnesses Protection Act, which goes beyond mere protection against self-incrimination in examination before Royal Commissions of Enquiry. In any event the usual privileges of ordinary witnesses, the inviolability of marital communications, of the confessional, and of the lawyer-client relationship do not extend to persons compelled to testify before Congressional committees. It is true that in one case our Supreme Court said that the power to investigate does not include the right to pry into the private affairs of ordinary citizens; but there are many instances in which this rule has been disregarded.

Furthermore the lack of regularized procedure is

apparently a tax on the powers of the committee to restrain itself. Hearings are conducted in secret, and hardly have the echoes of the testimony died in the hearing room when the examiner or a Committee member rushes to the press with a press release.

The transcripts of the hearings under Dies' chairmanship do not show a desire to learn all of the facts; accusations and charges were welcomed and admitted by wholesale; witnesses carrying condemnations of persons and institutions were allowed to give testimony by the hour, to throw in hearsay, and unsubstantiated reports, letters, documents, and the like. But the persons accused were either not given the right to appear or, if they were, were subjected to the most thoroughgoing cross-examinations, as witness the case of Hallië Flanagan when called on to defend her position with the Federal Theatre Project.

It is not fair to the Committee to condemn the effectiveness of its cross-examining persons accused; that is not intended. But the contrast between the receipt of accusations and the treatment of denials suggests the need for a remedy.

I think it is fair to say that these committees, while exerting a strong influence on the welfare of individuals, have in the main had a negligible effect on legislation. This is to say that their avowed purpose has not been served, but collateral consequences, (e.g. the defeat of Frank Murphy, now a Justice of the Supreme Court, for reelection as governor of Michigan) have been marked. Investigation into political philosophy with governmental sanction, and under the shadow of prison, is a serious departure for a government whose constitutional principle was declared by Justice Holmes to be freedom of thought.

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*Of all the miserable, unprofitable, inglorious wars, the worst is the war against words.*

— AUBERON HERBERT

## A Summing Up

BERNARD C. SCHOENFELD

**W**E, who have gathered the material for this special section on Freedom of the Screen are fully aware that we resemble the film projectionist who, having run several reels of a mystery film studded with ingenious paradox and clues insinuating

of a bang-up climax, discovers that the last reel is missing.

What can he do but shut off the projector, go outside for a beer and leave the audience to groan a bit and seek answers for themselves to the relevant questions raised. Not having the time for a beer, and mindful of the Production Code which would have us drink only for therapeutic reasons, we will spend our time going

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BERNARD C. SCHOENFELD, a member of the Editorial Committee served as chairman of the sub-committee charged with the preparation of the preceding material in this section.



back over the reels projected in order to re-emphasize those questions which this special section has indicated.

In Hollywood fashion many people have put together the material which told this unfinished narrative. In what we may call the First Sequence, written by Martin Field, we harked back to a more peaceful Hollywood when the word "censorship" connoted merely the elimination of a siren's thigh or the deletion of dialogue thought too provocative for our spinster aunts and our budding Pollyannas. But as Mr. Field continued his account of the recent past, dramatic conflict developed.

Certain characters were introduced. Long shots of churchmen, of the Legion of Decency, of "public spirited" citizens, arbiters of the nation's *mores* who took places on our various state censorship boards. Had we looked carefully we might even have seen a close-up of Mr. Bascom, of Memphis, Tennessee, who banned *The Southerner*, because, as he claimed, the film held The South up to ridicule.

Whether such men are heroes or villains in this story of Freedom of the Screen is worthy of debate; for, as Mr. Fields points out, these churchmen and state boards have the power to approve or reject the portrayal of Americans poor and rich, sinner and ascetic, radical and the late George Apley.

It becomes clear therefore, from Mr. Field's sequence that certain questions might be asked:

*Shall the industry consider audiences to be the final judges of whether our stories possess good taste and mirror actuality? Or shall it continue to sit back and allow assorted censorship boards to snip and cut or ban altogether a film which they dislike perhaps for individual or pressure-group reasons?*

What choice has the industry in this matter?

*Is adherence to the Code governed by pressure rather than by good taste?*

*Why, as Mr. Warner asks later, was The Outlaw allowed to be shown? And certain scenes in Duel in the Sun? And fly-by-night pictures shown in fifth-run houses which advertise For Adults Only?*

Does Mr. Breen's recent conference with the Rank organization portend a rigid control on the content of British films shown in this country? As certain trade papers insinuate, will the Breen Office use the dollar threat so that henceforth all tortured lovers like those in *Brief Encounter* will be visibly punished for their sad, short, desperate romance? Or, as others believe, will the film industry of Great Britain maintain its aesthetic autonomy?

The first sequence fades out with the departure of Will Hays and the appearance of a new leading character, Mr. Eric Johnston. A panoramic long shot—the setting, Washington, D.C. And so, an obvious

question: *Why has the Motion Picture Association of America moved its operations from Hollywood, where films are made, to Washington, D.C. where the political fate of the world is pondered?*

HERE, in Washington, the second sequence begins. The story continues, however, with Mr. Johnston's recent tour of the studios to address writers, directors and producers. Though the image is a trifle blurred, the dialogue is sufficiently clear to give us the answer to our last question. For we learn, through this leading character that the motion picture industry is tied inexorably to the political scene in Washington by two problems: the need to keep our hold on foreign markets and the influence of our films in implementing the State Department's present foreign policy.

Mr. Johnston stated that this foreign policy has as its purpose the countering of Soviet expansion. He spoke of the content of American motion pictures as a means of helping to express this policy to the rest of the world.

We learn all this from Mr. Johnston's own words, spoken succinctly as dialogue in any good, suspenseful film should be spoken. Now, the exposition is finished. We are in the thick of action.

To many members of The Screen Writers' Guild who have consistently argued that politics national or international should never be mixed with Guild matters, Mr. Johnston proves once and for all that whether or not we like it, writers are at the moment in politics up to their typewriter ribbons.

This drama now becomes classical in the sense that not only are screen writers in the audience but are participating as actors as well. At this point in the continuity we ask:

*If our government requests an industry in peacetime to follow a definite foreign policy, does this affect freedom of the screen? Are we being shanghaied onto a ship of state steered by departmental helmsmen in dead of night as some aver? Or, as others believe, are we being allowed willingly to sign up for the voyage wherever it may take us?*

In the motion picture industry there are those who are certain that this foreign policy is correct. There are also others who claim that such a policy will lead to inevitable catastrophe and atomic war. There are some who believe that we are already in an undeclared war and of necessity we must obey, as in wartime. And then, there are those who haven't come to any decision. So, we ask, believing that it bears on Freedom of the Screen: *Does Mr. Johnston know how the majority of writers, producers, directors, actors and other industry personnel feel concerning this policy? Isn't it important to find that out in the interest of industry unity?*

These are just a few of the questions which the introduction of Mr. Johnston into the second sequence of our story forces us to ask.

AS Mr. Johnston leaves the scene (his presence, however, can be felt throughout the remaining sequences) the plot is continued, written by Vladimir Pozner.

Mr. Pozner is saying that today dynamic forces are reshaping social institutions; recasting old codes into new ones, for good or for evil. Both Mr. Pozner and Mr. Johnston agree on this point, for otherwise there would not be these problems of foreign markets and adherence to a new foreign policy. Recently back from Europe, Mr. Pozner emphasizes the kaleidoscopic changes taking place there. Newspaper headlines and the daily job of living also convince us that there are similar jarrings occurring in Latin America and Asia. If we examine Mr. Pozner's sequence closely we can see, as in a swift montage, shots of entire peoples being engulfed in political upheavals. Beliefs of every kind are being put forward as the correct Way of Life. Whether we like it or not, Mr. Pozner asserts, millions upon millions of Europeans who have known the horrors of persecution and starvation are thinking out their lives with desperate realism. These millions of potential ticket-buyers assume that American films will face quite as realistically, all aspects and conditions of American existence.

The American film, many think, could be a form of international expression between men of all countries who wish to live in peace with each other. The content we choose for our future pictures will either contribute to or detract from this ideal. If the audiences of Paris, Bucharest or Lima prefer to stay away from American films, it will be due, Mr. Pozner suggests, to the fact that we American picture makers are portraying our own American lives as though we existed in a world of peppermint sticks, song and dance sequences, western deserts; all lovers Betty Grables and Tyrone Powers; and every returned veteran a bank-depositor living in a comfortable home on a peaceful, integrated planet. So, we must ask more questions raised by Mr. Pozner's sequence:

*Since, on the one hand, Mr. Johnston, with perfectly good business sense hopes our films will make money in foreign markets, shall we make the kind of film that the rest of the world wishes to see? Or will we portray only stock characters placed in situations romanticized*

*and glamorized beyond a semblance of normal American living? And if we do this will not such films help ruin our foreign market?* Is Mr. Pozner correct in his belief or is he completely wrong?

If we satisfy the State Department's repeated preference to show the American way of life, which American way of life does Mr. Johnston suggest out of the many ways? Out of the many lives? The lives that are in the shadows as well as those in sunlight? In either case there will be those on State Boards or in Washington who will demand rigid censorship as certain censors did in the case of *The Southerner* and more recently with *Monsieur Verdoux* and *The Farmer's Daughter*?

Dore Schary's remarks in this connection are a warning.

HERE indeed are labyrinthine paradoxes. And when we re-read Archer Winsten's observations they are compounded with a vengeance. It should give the writer and the producer both pause to know what Mr. Winsten, a distinguished film critic, thinks on viewing the content of current American films.

WE believe the questions raised here are more worthy of discussion at Romanoff's than what horse won which race. Because, as Mr. Johnston so correctly warns us, the foreign market means our jobs and we must decide together — writers, producers, directors as a family intent on staying in business — what we are to do about facing the problems of market and content within a State Department policy which involves us in so many uncertainties.

Yes, the projectionist wishes he had the last reel of this story of Freedom of the Screen. But as yet it has not even been written, let alone rewritten. So the story must end here.

AS the members of the Screen Writers Guild and all other readers leave the theatre of speculation and gather in the lobby to ponder, we sincerely hope they will discuss the pros and cons of the questions raised and articulate their conclusions.

Let one word clash against another. It is better that way than the gagging of opinion. Thus, doubts and half-truths will become convictions and the art and craft of the motion picture will gain strength and integrity out of the questioning paradox which is the present Hollywood hour.

*(This Special Section on Freedom of the Screen was prepared by an Editorial Sub-Committee composed of Martin Field, Lester Koenig, Theodore Strauss and Bernard C. Schoenfeld, chairman.)*



# The Future of Screen Writing

SHERIDAN GIBNEY

*SWG member SHERIDAN GIBNEY is a writer-producer whose articles in the May and June issues on the craft of screen writing have attracted much attention. He here considers what is ahead in the profession of screen-writing.*

EVERYONE acknowledges that the screen is a great and powerful medium, but few agree upon the manner in which it should be used. Some would like to use it as an instrument of propaganda; others for education; and still others for what they loosely term "pure" entertainment. No doubt it will and should be used for all three purposes; but I submit that its finest potentialities lie elsewhere — in the realm of art.

No amount of preaching, teaching, or entertaining can satisfy the deepest needs of the human mind which hungers for understanding and self-knowledge, and in the final analysis will accept no substitute for what it perceives to be true.

I believe, therefore, that the enormous appeal that motion pictures have is not, as is often claimed, because they afford a means of "escape" for the individual, but precisely the opposite. The motion picture like the drama, of which it is a new and more popular form, helps the spectator resolve his inner conflicts, satisfy impossible or impractical longings, and, far more effectively than churches do, gives moral sanction to his behavior.

As I have pointed out before, the drama is of religious origin and has been used through the centuries to objectify the inner compulsions of man, "To show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image," and portray the terrifying consequences of deeds that are socially tabu or psychologically unsound. It is concerned, and always has been, with the ethics of human relationships, with "good" or "bad" behavior patterns, with socially acceptable attitudes and those that are not, with what is admirable and what is despicable, what is fine and what is base. To a far greater extent than people realize the theatre's real function is religious. While the spectator is being "entertained," he is also being punished or rewarded for some portion of his secret and unexpressed inner life as he sees it portrayed on the stage or screen.

If there is any need to prove this, listen to people's

comments as they leave a theatre. You hear such remarks as: "I would never have done that, would you?" or (with relief) "I've felt that way many times," or "John's like that. I wish he'd see this picture," etc. etc. It is the inner life that is being evaluated, purged, corrected, or resolved, even though the spectator is frequently unaware of it. That this is one of the functions of dramatic representation has long been accepted by philosophers from Aristotle to Freud.

BUT hitherto only the poets bothered about the theatre, the gifted minds that had an urge to write, not for money primarily but fame, or some inner necessity to objectify the turmoil and conflict of subjective life; and as a consequence, because the motive was single and impassioned, the works they produced, good or bad, had the stamp of their own personalities, and oftentimes vivid and unmistakable flashes of insight which established the individual's plight as a part of universal experience.

It is not so today; for the theatre, and its prodigious off-spring, motion pictures, have passed into other hands. In the last hundred years, because of increased urban populations and improved transportation, accessibility to the theatre has greatly expanded its audience and its profits. It is understandable, therefore, that entrepreneurs in the form of bankers and real estate men should have seen in this unique phenomenon of an art making money a sound financial opportunity; and they were quick to seize it. The actor-manager and the writer-manager soon found themselves at the mercy of the men who owned the theatres, the Shuberts or the Erlangers, or those professional money-raisers, the commercial producers, who could meet the growing cost of production.

By 1900 the theatre, in this country at least, had become a flourishing enterprise for shrewd financiers, and by 1910 with the proven marketability of the motion picture, it had passed completely out of the hands of writers and actors and had become a vested

interest of enormous corporations. The unbelievable had happened — an age-old art, spawned by the church, developed by poets and mimes, financed by patrons and subsidized by courts and states, had suddenly become Big Business. The aspiring dramatist no longer had to live in a garret, sponge on his friends for meals or find a wealthy dowager for a patron. His patron was waiting for him, eager to have him, seeking him out. He had only to pledge allegiance to Loew's Inc. and dedicate his talents to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. All of which would have been fine if his talents had been permitted to develop in the new art form; but the making of pictures soon became a subsidiary of a vast real estate empire, and the writing of pictures subordinate to the marketing of stars.

BEARING these facts in mind it is difficult to prophesy how long it will take for writers and actors to win back even a modicum of freedom in the practice of their respective arts. Occasionally a picture like *Brief Encounter* comes along, and because it is well written, intelligently cast and competently directed, it is received with critical acclaim. The "acclaim," I think, is largely an expression of public amazement that the picture was ever "allowed" to be made. It has none of the standard attributes of "good showmanship." It has no glamor, no stars, no topical or controversial theme. The story is slight and thinly spun and ends unhappily (according to prevailing formula) when the leading man fails to "get" the leading lady. (Conceive if you can of Greer Garson giving up Clark Gable to remain with her husband, Don Ameche.) In addition, it has an economy of "production value" that would make many Hollywood executives ashamed to have it seen.

What, then, has it? It is not a great picture by any standard, but it has one magical quality common to all good art; it conveys a sense of truth. It is neither forced nor exaggerated. It tells a poignant story with insight and compassion without violating human experience.

"This," say our critics and detractors, "is more like it. It's the sort of picture we want." And immediately into the production mills of huge studios are rushed the blueprints of similar projects. But, alas for corporate enterprise, it doesn't work that way. Most manufacturers know precisely what their product consists of and what benefit it will be to the consumer. They know how to wrap it up attractively, advertise, and market it; but the hapless movie maker has only an artist's perception of truth to sell — as intangible an asset as ever harassed the mind of an anxious merchant. No wonder he seeks insurance and reassurance in the form of popular film personalities, costly exploitation cam-

paigns, block booking, and the exclusive ownership of the nation's theatres. No wonder he imposes upon himself a crippling code of "don'ts" to make his product acceptable to every nationality, race, sect, political party, protective society, profession, belief, and prejudice on earth. No wonder he fears writers, upon whose willingness and ability to work within these limitations depends the continuance of his counterfeit art, which excludes from the screen by rigid censorship many of the literary masterpieces of the world.

Let's keep the code — he says — but make better pictures. Audiences are sick of the formula that made us millions. Let's find another. Let's do pictures about real people, real emotions, real situations. Let's have a little truth for a change. But keep the code!

This is the ultimate absurdity to say that profits depend on a more honest artistic effort but writers must not be given the freedom to make the effort for fear of losing profits.

SUCH being the case, as I believe it is, what can be said for the future of screenwriting? At best, I think, we can hope for a gradual divorcement of the art from the industry; and there is no reason why both should not prosper. With the increasing number of independent companies, one picture ventures, percentage deals, there is much greater opportunity today than ever before for a writer to write a screenplay and exercise the same control over its production as the playwright does in the theatre. His success will depend on his talent, as it should. It is certainly not implausible to expect, when conditions are favorable, that fine talents will come to light, and pictures bearing the imprint of authors' personalities begin to appear on the screen.

Because of its greater scope and flexibility the motion picture medium should prove an even greater challenge to the writer's imagination than the theatre has been; and because it is a popular medium, there is no limit to its audience other than that imposed by a scarcity of theatres and equipment.

It can present with equal ease the sagas of fable and folklore, the Book of Genesis or the Book of Revelations, the Divine Comedy or the Canterbury Tales. A modern Dante or a modern Chaucer may well find in this medium an opportunity which the theatre never afforded him. A modern Moliere may arise to dramatize our vanities and conceits or an Ibsen to define our social problems. If Shaw were a young man today it is quite conceivable that he would write for the screen, as H. G. Wells avowed in his own case.

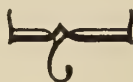
But this can only happen when writers are accorded greater freedom, as in the British film industry, and are encouraged by a more receptive attitude on the part of producers to try their wings. No writer wants to



venture into new fields without a reasonable chance of production. And yet it seems to me that such is the current trend. Writers are being given greater authority than ever before — as witness the increasing num-

ber of writer-producers, writer-directors, — and with good reason, for the old system is artistically bankrupt.

The ball has been tossed to the essential creators. It remains to be seen how far they can run with it.



## Reading for the Movies

HARRY BERNSTEIN

*HARRY BERNSTEIN, a motion picture story department reader, herein describes working conditions in his craft in New York. Mr. Bernstein assures the Editorial Committee that he has stated the situation accurately,\* and other sources say he has used notable restraint in his portrayal of the case of the New York readers.*

THE Story Editor was passing through the front office anyway, so he stopped to speak to me. He was a tall, thin fellow, partly bald, and he scratched the back of his head apologetically and said he was sorry, but there was nothing in right then, he had hardly enough stuff to keep his regular readers going, but if I were to drop in around the middle of July, in about two weeks that was, there might be something.

I murmured thanks and went out, feeling that it was too good to be true anyway — to read books and to get paid for it. Someone had told me that the moving picture companies hired people to read manuscripts for them on a part-time basis at so much per manuscript. It was just the sort of thing I wanted. I was writing my book at that time, I was going to be famous in a short time, and I needed something to keep the pot boiling until my book was written? And what could be a more pleasant way of making money than by reading? I read anyway in my spare time, so why not get paid for doing it? But a lot of other people evidently felt the same way about it as I did, for the various

story offices were clogged up with readers. The editors were all very sorry.

I was not going to give up so easily. About the middle of July, remembering the last editor's suggestion, I dropped in. This time I was sent in to his office. My heart was pounding. I'd done it. The editor was seated at his desk, busy over some work. He looked up as I entered, mumbled a greeting, then glanced at the pile of books and reading material on the table at his right. He singled out one book, a brightly jacketed thing, and handed it to me, saying, "Give me an idea of its literary content."

Then he turned me over to his secretary, a tired looking girl, who sighed and told me to follow her. We went down a corridor into an office at the far end of the suite. The secretary introduced me to the file clerk, a tall, thin girl with a tight dress. She glowered at me, plumped some carbon and paper in front of me, and said I would find all I wanted to know on the sheet of instructions and the sample synopsis. As I went out, I thought I heard her mutter, "Another one." But I didn't care. I was treading on air. I was a reader.

Yes, sir. I was a reader. At home, in my furnished room, I settled myself comfortably in the slightly louse-eaten armchair, a package of cigarettes before me, a footstool to stretch my legs on. The book was tripe, something to do with a spoiled heiress, who was wangling for a handsome architect, who in turn loved a gift shoppe girl. But I wasn't taking any chances. I read it carefully, each page thoroughly and thought of Gary Cooper and Joan Crawford in the leading roles.

*\*Mr. Bernstein writes as follows:*

The experience of which I told in my article is fairly recent. I am surprised that you have not heard how bad conditions were among the outside readers in New York, since they have often been brought out by the Readers' Guild. I am back at the same sort of work, and the only change I find is that some of the studios have upped the basic rate from five to six and sometimes seven dollars a book, thus making the average earnings of the outside reader about thirty-five a week instead of twenty-five. Also one or two studios give typewriter ribbons to their more favored readers. Otherwise things are very much the same.

I didn't know much about moving pictures. I hadn't been to very many in my life.

I spent a sleepless night worrying whether I should recommend the book or not. God knows it seemed like the sort of thing the movies put on, but I wasn't sure. In the morning I started to write the synopsis. The instructions said a minimum of six pages, so I wrote six pages. Then there was a summary and a comment. In the comment I tried to be as noncommittal as possible. I said that while it seemed to have some screenable material, on the whole it was slight and lacked originality. What the hell, I didn't know. I just wasn't taking any chances.

I found that it was three o'clock when I was through. I hurried back to the story office on Sixth Avenue in the big Rockefeller Center Building. I was worried all the way over, wondering whether I had said the right thing or not. Gosh, supposing it turned out to be first class movie stuff, and I'd passed it up. I had half a mind to turn back and do it over. But I didn't. The editor mumbled his same greeting as I came in. He glanced briefly at my comment, then turned to the last page and frowned slightly. He said they usually did more than six pages — and I ought to clean my type out. Anyway, there was nothing in right then, but if I was ever around again, I might drop in, or I could call up.

SO much for that. There had been stuff on his table, but I was not supposed to see it. I slunk out, miserable. Guess I'd fallen down on the job or he'd have given me something else. I didn't know that it was the regular procedure, a sort of test of a reader's persistence. If a reader came back often enough he really wanted the job, and the movie companies wanted readers who really wanted jobs. I did — at least that job. There was my masterpiece to write. I had to consider that. So I called up and came down several times, and finally I was rewarded with another book.

This time I wrote a synopsis of ten pages. The editor pursed his lips and said sometimes readers wrote synopses of fifteen and twenty pages, and even as much as thirty. It was fairly common. I started to tell him that it took up too much time, that if I were to write fifteen or twenty pages I would have to take two days on a book. But I figured he might not like that. He wouldn't have. Anyway, he seemed more satisfied than the last time. From then on I wrote longer synopses. They took up more of my time than I had expected. In fact I was not getting any time to write my book. But I thought — what the hell — just as soon as I break in I'll be able to ease off. My book would wait, my epic.

I didn't know then that it was the busy season. The

Fall publishing lists were coming in from the publishers and agents. The editor's desk was piled high with stuff. His greeting as I came in was more genial. In those next few weeks I read my guts out. Novels of all sorts, romances, mysteries, an occasional piece of literature; plays, plays that had been produced or were going to be produced or that nobody in his right mind would ever produce. Short stories, magazines, articles, even newspaper features. Essays, books on the Panama Canal, on the Suez Canal, the Chicago River, the Canarsie Bay, everything under the sun. And once, God help me, a book of poems.

I couldn't handle more than one a day — and this was enough. Reading the book would take me an average of four hours; writing the synopsis about four, five or six hours. If the manuscript was recommended, then I would be required to write an extremely long synopsis which, in itself, would take two days. And no extra pay for it, either. I started work at nine in the morning, usually. I did the synopsis then. I came into the office about two, often not having had any lunch. Sometimes the editor was dictating, or in conference, or something of the sort, and readers had to wait often as much as an hour before going in to see him. It was about half-past three when I got home. There was dinner — or supper or lunch — sometimes even breakfast — and then back to reading the manuscript I had been given. I might not be through with my day's work until ten that night. If the book was extra long, I might be up until twelve reading it. And no extra pay for it either.

Quite often there were "rush jobs." These were manuscripts that, because of some special reason, perhaps because the agent was a favorite, or the manuscript considered "hot" — had to be in at nine the next morning. That meant I would be up most of the night typing out my synopsis. The people downstairs complained. The landlady threatened to kick me out. I told them all to go to hell. I was always in a bad mood.

And it was hot that September. The sweat poured off me. The galleys were long and cumbersome to handle, and slipped to the floor. The keys of my typewriter stuck. I was a two finger artist. I cursed. I raved. I was a madman.

Now and then we were sent out to read at the offices of publishing companies or agents. This was done for the same reason as the "rush job" business. You'd think the agents and publishers would treat us with a certain amount of respect. No such thing. They stuck us in all sorts of odd, uncomfortable corners. One pulp magazine I visited put me in the waiting room, right near the door. Every time the door opened, the pages of the manuscript would fly off the table. And people were passing to and fro constantly. Girls came out to gossip



with the receptionist. Salesmen were interviewed. While I tried to read about how the Arizona Kid galloped madly through the valley to rescue the rancher's fair daughter — damn her.

One time I went up to an agent's office. The agent was an elderly, rusty looking dame. But she seated herself directly in front of me in the tiny, crowded office (part of which was a circulating library) and crossed her legs so that I could see her knobby knees. She kept her gaze fixed on me all the time I read, and presently when I had passed uncomfortably part way through the manuscript she began asking me how I liked it, and didn't I think Barbara Stanwyck would do well in the part of the heroine. After she had asked me the same question a few times, a funny look, I guess, began to come on my face. She then reached for the phone and called up another moving picture company and told them to send down a reader. "And be sure you send someone down with a little sense," she said.

YOU can guess what I was up against. Hard as I worked I could never make more than twenty-five dollars a week. That was tops. For a book, regardless of length, I received five dollars. For a novelette, three dollars, and two dollars apiece for short stories. And I was working morning, afternoon and night! Sometimes Saturdays and Sundays too! I hadn't touched my novel for weeks. I didn't know what it looked like. When I did have some time left, I was too tired to do anything. At the end of the week I was so dazed, somebody said I looked like a cow that had been dealt a severe blow on the head.

But pretty soon the slump started. The Fall publishing season was over. No longer was the editor's table piled high with work. And no longer was his tone as genial as before. Quite often I did not gain admittance even to his office. The secretary would come out and shake her head wearily, saying she was sorry but there was nothing in right then. I had plenty of time for my book, all right. But I wasn't making enough to live on. The other readers were in pretty much the same fix. They haunted the office day and night practically. One would be coming in hopefully and he would meet another coming out emptyhanded. Then his hope would die.

By now I had come to know some of the readers. A few, like myself, were "working on a novel." Reading manuscripts was just a stopgap for them until they had completed their novel and had sold it and become rich and famous. One had actually written and had published a novel, but it had not made much of a success. Another had, several years ago, written a rather well-known movie in which Emil Jannings had acted. The latter, a thin, gloomy fellow, usually sat apart from us

in the front office when we were waiting to see the editor, staring sullenly at the floor, never talking. When it was his turn to go in, he got to his feet abruptly, pushed the editor's door open roughly. Never once did he say anything to us.

One, an elderly woman, was forever sighing about the old days. She was very heavily rouged, and her grey hair was bobbed. When she sat down you saw her stockings rolled below her knees, and tied with garters made out of pieces of string. With tears in her eyes, she would tell us of the days when she used to get fifty dollars for reading a manuscript, and all the time she wanted. She would take a few out to the country with her, read them at a leisurely pace, then dictate the synopsis to a secretary. But of course she was a very important woman in those days. She wrote novels, and had plays produced on the stage, and the screen. "Ah yes," she would sigh, "those were the days." The next moment she would be dropping her purse, and her handkerchief and her spectacle case as she jumped up to answer the story editor's call.

One day, I was about to enter the building, when a limousine drew up at the curb. A smartly dressed woman in her middle thirties got out, followed by a string of yapping low bellied dogs that looked like frankfurters. I let her enter first with the dogs, then followed her into the elevator. She got out at my floor, and entered the Story Office. Immediately there was a commotion. The entire office staff ran out to greet her, crying, "Felice, darling!" The dogs started yapping.

Felice darling was also a reader. She was the intellectual daughter of some wealthy Wall Street man who had an interest in the movie firm. She read, we understood, "to keep herself out of mischief."

The file clerk turned out to be all right. After I had given her a piece of chewing gum one day she whispered to me that the other movie company across the street was busy and needed readers. She said that seeing as how there wasn't much in the reading line right now here, I might try them across the street. I went across. They must have been pretty busy. The editor, a woman this time, didn't ask any questions. She handed me a manuscript and my heart leaped when I saw it. The yellow egg stain on the front cover told me that it was the manuscript I had covered for the other firm a week ago. It was a cinch. But that sort of luck didn't continue. Because I could not make a living by working for either firm singly, I attempted to work for both at the same time, hoping that when one firm did not give me work, the other would.

Readers have tried that stunt often. It has never worked. It can't. Almost invariably, when one turned me away empty-handed, the other did too. And when one gave me a script, so did the other. So then I was

faced with the appalling task of covering two books in one day. And one might happen to be a rush job. The first editor apparently suspected, for he delivered a long lecture one afternoon on "loyalty to the firm." He hinted that there were rewards for people who devoted their entire energies to the firm. There were such things as inside reading jobs — steady work — steady pay — (thirty-five a week, I found out later). The editor concluded his lecture by saying that he must have readers who were on call all the time. Readers that weren't on call he didn't want.

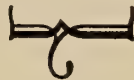
I caught on. I dropped the other firm. They'd have dropped me anyway in a short time, as their work was falling off. At the first place work had picked up slightly, but it came in dribs and drabs. The most I could make was about fifteen dollars a week. In the Spring there was another busy season. With its seasons, it was just like the tailoring or bricklaying trade. During the season I made as high as twenty-five a week. Then the season stopped and I was back to fifteen a week, sometimes ten, sometimes five, sometimes nothing a week.

AS time passed, I began to notice new faces appear among the readers, old faces disappear. The turnover of readers I learned was rapid. The life of the average manuscript reader for the movies was about one year. After that time he was considered played out, jaded, too apt to pass up good stuff. The moving picture people could afford to be independent toward their readers. College boys sometimes offered to do the work for nothing, simply to gain experience in the writing

world. Writers in Hollywood who had failed to renew their contracts were consoled with jobs in the Story Office. Executives got rid of the lesser important relatives by sending them into the Story Office. Bored society girls read manuscripts to kill time.

My turn came in a very short time. It was after I had taken the liberty of writing a mere eight page synopsis on a certain book that didn't stand a dog's chance anyway. This might not have had anything to do with it, since I had written eight page synopses before. I don't know. Anyway, the editor's face began to stiffen when he saw me, and he shook his head. Nothing in today. When I called on the phone, his secretary, who had gone to Hunter College, drawled, "Awfully sorry, but really things are so slow." Then one day the editor said he didn't think there'd be anything in for quite some time, he hardly had enough to keep his regular staff of readers going, but if I happened to be around the neighborhood in — say — a few weeks, I might drop in.

Only this time I didn't drop. I was through with reading for the movies. The next time I read, which wouldn't be for quite some time, it would be for myself. I wouldn't get paid for it, but I wouldn't mind. I had a good job, washing dishes in a cafeteria. The job didn't pay much more than reading manuscripts, but it left me a good deal more leisure time. I was going to utilize that time working on my book. It wasn't the same book that I had originally set out to write. It was a brand new idea, based on my recent experiences. It was to be called, *Books of Wrath*, and it was to deal with migratory manuscript readers in America.



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(June 23, 1947)

Columbia — Melvin Levy.

MGM — Anne Chapin; alternates, Sidney Boehm, Marvin Borowsky, Margaret Fitts, Charles Kaufman.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox — Richard Murphy.

Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks.

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International — Silvia Richards.

RKO — John Twist.





## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

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## E D I T O R I A L

*Absolute freedom to present all  
public issues is the foundation  
stone of American liberty.*

—Herbert Clark Hoover

THERE is need to investigate Hollywood and its vast business of imagery. It is a pity in a way that this need has been repeatedly and pointlessly obscured by the low-comedy level so characteristic of the Dies-Rankin-Thomas Un-American Activities Committee, with its overtones of mountebankery and megalomania.

Apparently that has happened again. The routine grows monotonous. First the bread-and-circuses build-up, the 160-point Hearstian banner lines, the shrilly indiscriminate cries against whipping boy writers and pictures to the accompaniment of publicity pyrotechnics that exude the faintly reminiscent smell of burning books. Then the quick fadeout, with the whole uproar as tricky and evanescent as a bad dream sequence.

Show business, particularly Hollywood show business, fits so perfectly this diversionary technique, which takes millions of minds off high prices, bad housing and other worries. In Hollywood itself our complex production machine is in need of expert overhauling, of intensive lucubration, and not of this crude congressional monkey wrench irresponsibly tossed into it.

It is a delicate and wonderful machine, and of late it hasn't been working very well. The machine from the god, Dudley Nichols called it in one of his prefaces; the machine which in ancient Greek drama projected the god-actor

to the stage from the upper wings, and now in our common use and able to project into countless millions of brains the dreams, the beauty, the truth, the dignity and happiness that could be the common heritage of human beings.

But Nichols points out that this gift which brought added power also enhanced responsibility; and that so far these machines from the gods have meant cultural regression rather than advancement. The integrity of newspapers, the responsibility of radio, have retrogressed as their power increased.

What the motion picture machine has done to enrich culture has not lived up to its far-reaching potentials.

Why? Here is something that opens up many vistas of investigation.

The idea for such investigations might not be utterly utopian or academic. Such probings and soul searchings of course should come from within the motion picture industry, or at least should originate in maturely competent outside agencies rather than in the minds of headline hunters. Such an investigative move was recently made and its results published by the University of Chicago Commission to study the freedom of the press, screen and radio. This commission's findings under the guidance of Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago and Zechariah Chaffee, Jr., professor of law at Harvard University, were of importance to Hollywood and the American public. But they were drowned in the tidal wave of sensational Thomas Committee press releases. Again, that is a pity.

PROBABLY the most effective diagnosis of our creaking motion picture machine must come from within the industry. Among the creative men and women who make American movies there are rich resources of intelligence and integrity for such an investigative survey.

There is need for impartial, basic exploration of such problems as:

1. *Hollywood's labor situation.* Why does the long studio lockout, the prolific cause of hardship and higher production costs, remain unsettled? Is it true, as John Gunther says in his new book, *Inside The U.S.A.*, that all the major studios, even the so-called "liberal" lots, are basically anti-labor?

2. *Employment.* What must be done to halt the industry's shrinking employment trend, especially in the creative fields? What are the rock-bottom economic factors behind falling employment?

3. *Re-issues.* The release of these pictures is undermining employment in Hollywood with profit for the producing companies, but with no additional compensation for artists and craftsmen who originally created the properties.

4. *Monopoly Control.* The University of Chicago Commission cited as fundamental this problem of the increasingly monolithic control over production and distribution, and its corollary danger of the cartelization of thought.

5. *Intimidation.* Dozens of little and dubiously legal censorship boards throughout America habitually bulldoze the movies. Why not investigate and act on the need of united resistance to this blue law hypocrisy?

6. *Production Administration Code.* In concept and content this document



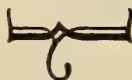
is widely recognized as in need of revision. Its contradictions and absurdities should be responsibly examined. The University of Chicago Commission recommended that this be undertaken by a board representing the Screen Writers' Guild, The Screen Directors' Guild, the Screen Actors' Guild and the Producers' Association operating with a national advisory board with broad public sponsorship.

7. *Film Content and Propaganda.* Into this old question new implications have been injected. What about them? Does the industry cling to its pious slogans of "pure entertainment?" Or have recent events induced the policy making entrepreneurs of the screen to abandon them and to embark on a new course of loading films with content, as long as the content message coincides with their social mores and political convictions? Is this the meaning behind Mr. Eric Johnston's recent talks to gatherings on the lots? If so, it is important to Hollywood, America and the world. Let it be brought out into the open, and examined frankly.

8. *Foreign Markets.* These markets, affording to the industry its financial gravy, affect every industry member, whether employer or employee. So the way in which the pictures we make affect those markets is of concern to us. We know that lack of content, vacuity in films, affects them adversely. How will heavy-handed content, plugging what may seem to them alien points of view, influence the foreign box office?

9. *Creative Control.* Every thoughtful analyst of the industry points to the need of greater participation and control of production by its creative elements if there is to be qualitative improvement in the output. Only in this way can we hope to compete with the quality British pictures are achieving through control by their creators.

THESE are some of the things that really need investigating in Hollywood. Intelligent investigation of them, followed by action, would make Hollywood a better place to live in, work in, and even to make money and reap dividends in. Continued abuse of our machine from the god is infinitely dangerous. Rightly used, it could greatly enrich human culture and civilization. In the world language of pictures it could raise its voice above the clash of ideologies, speak to all peoples of peace, democracy, freedom and the dignity of the human spirit. There may not be much time in which to do it.



# Report and Comment

## Critical Notes

By RAYMOND CHANDLER

I THINK some of my comments on the questionnaire were possibly a little more acid than necessary. The May number of *THE SCREEN WRITER* seems to me unusually good. If you have patience to read, I should like to offer detailed comments.

*Twice Sold Tales*, by Martin Field: This exposes a disgraceful situation which I don't suppose the Guild could ever entirely eliminate, since there will always be distress sales, that is sales by writers at unreasonably low prices because they happen to need the money or to think that the particular sale offered them is the only one they will ever get a chance at. No agent should be allowed to purchase and resell a literary property at a profit, either in his own name or through a dummy. An agent, to some extent at least, is in a position of trusteeship towards his clients as a whole and towards his individual client. If he cannot observe the integrity of this relationship, he should be blacklisted publicly. If there is any way of attacking him legally, it should be done by the Guild and I, as a member, should be only too glad to be assessed my share of the costs.

But let's be fair all around; actors, directors and writers should also be limited in buying literary properties on speculation, since the object of such purchases, when made in good faith, is not so much a profit as to tie up a property the individual is interested in seeing converted into a picture. It is obvious that the only legitimate action here is the taking of an option, and there should be an agree-

ment negotiated between the Guilds that any such option, if turned over to a studio at a profit must result in an equitable division of such profit between the optionee and the original seller. The optionee is entitled to some reward for taking the risk. Except in these special circumstances speculation in literary properties by others than producers who have resources to turn them into films is a vicious practice, will always be a vicious practice, and every effort should be made by our Guild and every other Guild to stop it.

My only personal experience with this sort of thing was the sale of an option to Howard Hawks, or rather to a company which was, in fact, Howard Hawks, which option Howard Hawks later turned over to Warner Brothers, and I am informed and on this information believe that Hawks made no direct profit from the transaction, but recovered from Warner Brothers the exact amount he was obligated to pay me, if he exercised his option. This is the sort of thing that we can respect; and I may add, if you don't already know it, that Howard Hawks is a pretty shrewd trader.

*What Is Screen Writing?*, by Sheridan Gibney: This admirable article of course requires no comment or criticism from me. It reinforces me in the thought, however, which I have had for a long time, that a screen adaptation of a play, or of a work of fiction, but more particularly of a work of fiction, is a new kind of literary property, and that the only thing that prevents us from asserting this right is the fact that most writers in Hollywood are employees, and must assign to the motion picture companies the right for those companies to call themselves the true authors. As long as writers remain employees, even if discontented ones, it will be impossible for them to put over the idea that a screen adaptation is not just a service performed.

As an individual I refuse to be an employee, but of course I am only an individual. I have a contract with Universal-International to write a screen play which expressly deals with me as an independent contractor. I admit that not many writers in Hollywood can get this now; not because they don't deserve it, but because they will not face the financial risks of demanding it, and refusing to work on any other terms. I have expressed some of these ideas to Mr. Albert Maltz, who did not deign to reply to them in the spirit in which they were given. I consider that in making this fight, solitary as it is, I am making a contribution to the status of the screen writer in Hollywood. There are too many barriers for any one man to break down, but every barrier that is broken down, and with good will on both sides, certainly is a good augury for the future.

*Film Author! Film Author!*, by Joseph L. Mankiewicz: I am in absolute disagreement with the philosophical basis of this article. I do not think a writer has to become a producer or director in order to be an independent artist. Some writers do not want to be directors or producers, and I will maintain that the best writers will not want to be directors or producers, because there is a cleavage between the creative art of writing and the arts of directing and producing, if indeed they are arts. They are, at their highest level, but their highest level is very seldom reached.

The few (there are probably not more than a score) really good directors, make very few pictures. The average Hollywood director is just about competent enough to direct traffic on a quiet Monday afternoon in Pomona. But even the best directors often disfigure the creative integrity of screen plays in favor of what they choose to call showmanship.

There is an innate, permanent, and probably necessary struggle between

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*SWG member Raymond Chandler, noted novelist, accompanied his reply to the recent questionnaire with some trenchant comments concerning THE SCREEN WRITER. Later, after reading the May issue, he sent in the above comments:*



what the director wants to do with his camera and his actors, and what the writer wants to do with his words and his ideas. When this struggle is reconciled, you may get a great picture. When it is eliminated by having both functions performed by the same man, you are much more apt to get the highest common factor of both talents. I know there are some exceptions to this, some famous ones in fact. They have, so far as I know, resulted from economic conditions which cannot be obtained in Hollywood.

It is no great trick to make artistic pictures, if you can make them for what the costumes of the star cost over here, and if a return equal to the salary of that same star would be a profitable return. There are plenty of artistic people about. The point is in Hollywood they have to use their talents to bring in two or three million dollars.

*Two Poems of Hollywood*, by John Motley.\* If you can get poetry as good as this, I am happy to withdraw my objections to the publication of poetry in THE SCREEN WRITER. Very good T. S. Eliot, and very good T. S. Eliot is good enough for me.

*Oh Mr. Johnston, Oh Mr. Breen!*: This is a very cute piece, but Phyllis Cornell is much too respectful to Mr. Eric Johnston. I take it that Mr. Johnston fits into his job or he couldn't have it. I take it that his business negotiations are all for the good of the industry. I think he would be a very nice guy at a Kiwanis Club luncheon, but when he starts talking about art, he is strictly from hamburger.

I am told — in fact I heard it with my own ears over the radio, but I am getting old and my memory plays me strange tricks — that Mr. Johnston announced on the occasion of the Academy Awards, that the motion picture was the greatest art form since the Greek drama. He made this announcement in the clear, ringing tones of one bringing tidings of a great victory. I do not think this statement should be allowed to die. I suggest it be engraved on an old bottle

cap and handed for safe keeping to one of the rhesus monkeys in the Griffith Park Zoo.

## *Why British Pictures Are Good:*

A lot of this is fairly sound stuff, but I think it overlooks a couple of rather significant points. One reason why British pictures seem very good is that they have been very bad in the past, and we are surprised that they are good at all. Another, and much more cogent reason is that British pictures are made close to the center of theatrical production. They can be cast thoroughly in all parts, large and small. In Hollywood we have a few high priced and talented stars, a number of second-rate stars who are not the equal of British performers, a few very good character actors, some reasonably effective hacks, and from that we drop straight down to the mass of bit players who try to steal the picture in a scene involving four lines of dialogue. So we don't write scenes for bit players, and in consequence our pictures are apt to lack the texture of British pictures. They are apt to be a series of highlighted, important scenes between the principals, strung together by passage work, movement, threading in and out of crowds, music, and so on. This is quite a handicap, since we lose the enriching effect of the peripheral writing which is so vital in fiction, and should be equally vital in motion picture making.

Lastly, about advertising. Don't let the opposition worry you. Be not afraid of commercialism and of losing that prepaid propaganda sheet. Of course advertising influences editorial policy. It always has, and it always will, but in the long run it influences it far less viciously than ideological pressure. Advertising in a magazine like this may create a few minor taboos, very minor I think, but it will also keep the magazine on an even keel. If the contents of a magazine do not force all kinds of people to buy it, the advertisers will not pay for space in it. Why should they? Advertising would force the magazine to become attractive, but not only to those who already think like it, and only want to read in print a more pointed expression of their own thoughts, but to people who neither share those thoughts nor are even aware of them; to people who are not interested in the Guild objects for Guild members, but in thought about motion pictures,

in clever and well written critical articles about motion pictures, and in any good reading matter whose basic subject is the motion picture. Only if this larger public buys this magazine, will the advertisers pay for space. Without this kind of support the magazine will be merely a tool for the party in power. Commercialism, with all its faults, is at least a fixed point of reference.

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## How Are Pictures Made?

THE question before the SWG Special Program Committee seminar at Lucey's on June 10 was: "*How can screen writers find out how pictures are made?*" Sitting at the speakers' table were Milton Krims, acting chairman of the Special Program Committee; Doré Schary, production head of RKO; Adrian Scott, producer; Vincent Sherman, director; Dorothy Bennett Hanna, writer; Walter McEwen, producer; Joseph Sistrom, producer, and Joseph L. Mankiewicz, director.

All the round table speakers except Walter McEwen have had screen writing experience. Mr. McEwen was a story editor for many years.

Mr. Krims opened the discussion with the remark that the question quoted above seemed to him to have a significantly plaintive connotation.

Mr. Schary observed that the question seemed not only plaintive but trite. He expressed the belief that any employed screen writer who seriously wishes to learn how pictures are made can do so. He can study good pictures, analyze the scripts, talk with directors, see the daily rushes, spend time on the sets. He promised that any writer employed at RKO or any other Hollywood studio would be given permission to spend time on RKO sound stages and observe production techniques.

Mr. Scott also referred to the plaintive quality of the question under discussion, and said he was unable to answer it. In his opinion the question should have been phrased in this way: "*Why is it that motion picture writers do not usually have the opportu-*

\*JOHN MOTLEY was a pseudonym used by Bernard C. Schoenfeld of THE SCREEN WRITER Editorial Committee.



nity to share in the making of motion pictures?"

He expressed the belief that under present conditions in Hollywood the producer is the only one who has direct access to full knowledge of how pictures are made; that the director has only occasional access to this knowledge; that camera men, cutters and actors as a rule have a fragmentary rather than full knowledge of screen techniques; and that when writers turn in the script they generally finish their participation in the making of the picture they have written. Mr. Scott said that the industry in Hollywood did not seem to be geared for full writer participation in picture making, and that possibly the problem should be subjected to psychoanalytical exploration.

Mr. McEwen greeted his old friends in the SWG gathering, and reserved his comments. Mr. Siström observed that for contract writers the problem of learning how pictures are made should be relatively easy, but that for the new writer who had sold an original or so it was a difficult problem badly in need of Hollywood's attention.

Mr. Mankiewicz said that Mr. Scott's statement about producers being the only ones with easy access to full knowledge of motion picture techniques was disturbing. He believed that writers, producers, directors, cutters and others primarily responsible for the making of motion pictures should have a good working knowledge of how pictures are made, and that when they did have this knowledge we would turn out better pictures. He said the motion picture is a special form of art; that its flexibility and tremendous technical resources must be learned by hard study and experience, as a novelist learns to write good novels, or a painter learns how to paint good pictures.

Mr. Sherman, who has had experience in the industry as an actor, writer and director, said that a writer brings to the task of creating a script these resources: the material at hand, and his concept of it; himself—his knowledge, his background, his attitudes and values; the technique which he must use to illustrate and make effective what he wants to say. He urged writers who want a better knowledge of how pictures are made to gain a better knowledge of how

the world we live in is made, of the problems and conflicts of our times, of the impact of these motivating pressures on human beings. He also emphasized the importance of more cooperation and contact between the writer and director before shooting starts, and while the script is still in the formative stage. He said that if use of the word *collective* is still allowable, he would like to see more genuine collective effort between writers, directors, producers and others engaged in the making of a picture. He pointed to the excellence of the current British film, *Great Expectations*, to illustrate the rewards of such collective activity in terms of integration and beauty. He cited the article by T. E. B. Clarke, the British writer-director, in the June issue of *THE SCREEN WRITER*, as an important illustration of the value of intra-studio cooperation.

Dorothy Bennett Hanna said writers, especially new writers, should get a better break in the studios; that money is not enough, and morale should be considered, too. She observed that a new writer goes into a studio, and is so overwhelmed by the private office, the secretary, the office couch and the salary that he or she does not have the nerve to ask for anything more. But she believed something more is needed—a more friendly spirit, more evidence of cooperation, more effort to show the new writers the ropes, to take them on the sets, to make them feel they are an integral part of the complex studio mechanism.

**A**FTER these opening statements by the round table speakers, Mr. Schary said that he had not met writers of the timid, shrinking type described by Miss Hanna. He did not see much point in having studios coddle writers, or subsidize their training.

He expressed the opinion that the great need is for writers to create good stories, well-written, rich in the detailed imagery that makes pictures come alive. If writers will do that, he said, they will not have to worry about their position in the studios. If they will put visual technique into their scripts, plenty of valid imagery, directors and producers will shoot the script as written, in the opinion of Mr. Schary.

Mr. Sherman observed that there

is a lack of books on motion picture directing. As a former dialogue director, he expressed amazement over what he called the "unnecessity" of so much dialogue in films. He advised writers to study the scripts of the old silent pictures and to analyze the techniques used when there was no conversation to supplement action.

There were many questions and remarks from the floor. Richard Macaulay observed that too many directors who could not write a scene themselves had a tendency to butcher writers' scripts. Borden Chase said directors had made the movies largely their medium, and advised writers to be content as writers. He believed that would pay off in a big way, and said it had paid him off last year to the extent of a quarter of a million dollars. Howard Young, with long experience in England as a screen writer, described working conditions in the English studios, where writers are consulted in all phases of production. Louise Randall Pearson presented some of her experiences and conclusions, and Dick Irving Hyland advised movie writers to see more movies. Gordon Kahn pointed out that while books on the technique of screen writing would fill a five foot shelf, there was a lack of books on the problems and techniques of production. He asked for more enlightenment from policy-making producers.

Mr. Schary and Mr. Mankiewicz suggested that it might be a good idea if SWG would inaugurate a series of seminars. Mr. Schary said important pictures could be shown at these seminars and their techniques discussed. Mr. Mankiewicz suggested joint seminars held by the Screen Writers' and Screen Directors' Guilds.

R. S.

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## The Wailing Wall At Lucey's

**D**EEP in the heart of New Mexico—and Texas, too, there are units of a cult calling themselves The Penitentes. Several times a year the members of this society gather in secret places to beat the tar out of themselves. They gash their bodies with broken glass and merrily inflict



lacerations, abrasions and contusions on each other. It's all very joyful and bloody — just like a bunch of screen writers whenever they gather in packs of four or more.

Since they bruise more easily than those fanatical seekers after grace writers merely beat their breasts in cadence, as they did the other night at Lucey's restaurant where 150 of them gathered at the invitation of the SWG's Special Events Committee to "find out how pictures are made."

Now we all know that any reader of newspaper film sections, popular weeklies and fan magazines is privy to the black arts of picture-making, from the script onward. They know the names as "styles" of every director and can recognize his "touch." They have become canny enough to detect process shots, miniatures and other screen illusions.

But the writers came anyhow. And ten minutes after the proceedings began, the sound of their knuckles on breast-bone could have been heard clear down to Figueroa Street.

From long habit, the writers rose one by one and assumed for their craft the whole responsibility for what ails the motion pictures today. Occasionally the testimony of sin was interrupted by the organ tones of those on the high altar who had once been writers themselves but now held posts as directors, writer-directors, writer-director-producers and all the variations in between. These men had written the masterworks, but the majority of those below the salt were the writers of the 425 turkeys out of the total annual product of 450 features.

Secretly, what the writers who foregathered on this occasion wanted to know, was how the producer explained his own contribution to the art of the motion picture. But they remained politely vague on that point, and the producers on the dais declined to broach it on their own account.

One writer attempted to draw the producers out on this phase of picture activity. He said that there are many textbooks on film writing; some disclosures by directors on their tech-

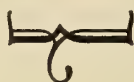
niques and by professors of other skills. But he knew of no book in which a producer makes clear his particular science. Perhaps, he implied, a producer contemplated such a book.

Instead of enlightenment on this subject, the questioner was given a swift and irresponsible one in the groin, which put the writers back on the defensive.

I am sure that the writer who wanted to know more about producers had intended no opprobrium. He was simply after enlightenment. In what respects do they help a picture along? Are they at the bow or the stern of the belt-line? Is there something they can still learn — or teach?

It is time that writers heard from them. Producers are the direct superiors of the writer when he is on an assignment. It is the producer's nod or frown that makes the difference not only in the spirit and zest with which he works, but to a vital extent in the quality of motion pictures.

Writers aren't always the heavies.  
G. K.



## SWG Bulletin

On Oct. 8, 1946, six screen writers, members of SWG, declined to enter the picketed Columbia lot and decided to do that day's work at home. As a result they were docked that day's pay. An arbitration board was finally appointed to decide whether or not the writers should be paid for the day they worked at home. The six writers were Ted Thomas, Brenda Weisberg, Malcolm Boylan, Bill Sackheim, Edward F. Huebsch and Morton Grant.

On May 31 the board of arbitration reached a decision completely vindicating the position of the writers and setting an important precedent. On this board Ring W. Lardner, Jr., represented the Screen Writers' Guild, Emmett P. Ward represented

Columbia Pictures Corporation and Gordon S. Watkins, professor of economics at the University of California in Los Angeles acted as the impartial member of the board.

The following excerpt from the board's decision is of particular significance.

Although the physical conditions surrounding the employer's Talisman Studio on the morning of October 8, 1946, were not such as to warrant the conclusion of the aforementioned writers that physical injury or personal violence was imminent, nevertheless circumstances were such as to provide ample grounds for considerable apprehensiveness with regard to the suffering of

personal indignity, discomfort and inconvenience. Such apprehensiveness was, we think, a sufficient reason for the employees' conclusion that they could not perform their customary services at the studio with the desired degree of mental ease and effectiveness, and that their respective assignments could be executed with greater efficiency at their individual homes.

The evidence is conclusive that each of the writers involved in the instant controversy performed his customary services at his or her home; that the results of these services performed at home on October 8, 1946, were subsequently accepted and used by the

several producers concerned. Columbia Pictures Corporation did not, therefore, suffer any loss through the conclusion of the said writers to work at home rather than at the studio, but, on the contrary, benefited from their services. The fact that the several producers accepted and used the results of work performed by the aforementioned writers on the day in question is easily ascertainable and suffered no refutation in testimony or written evidence presented at the hear-

ings. Moreover, it is apparently customary in the motion picture industry for writers to enjoy considerable freedom and latitude in the matter of reporting physically for work and as to the choice of working at the studio or at home, provided their desires are communicated to the employer.

Under the peculiar physical circumstances surrounding the studio on that date, the decision of said writers not to enter or remain at the studio for the pur-

poses of performing their customary services on October 8, 1946, did not constitute a clear and serious breach of contract. The Corporation in the Agreement to submit the controversy to arbitration stipulated that, despite the specific provisions of the contractual agreement, compensation would be paid in each case where it could be proved the work was actually performed at home. Ample proof of this fact was, we think, submitted by the employees.

## Correspondence

*The following letter has been received from George H. Elvin, general secretary of the Association of Cine-Technicians in England:*

Whilst I appreciate that the report in your May issue of Frank Launder's meeting with your members is necessarily curtailed I do feel that if it is an accurate summary of what Mr. Launder said he has certainly been pulling the wool over the eyes of your members.

The Screenwriters Association is not a trade union and the only negotiations with employers' federations are undertaken by this Union, to which all screen writers who are trade unionists belong. That is the reason, and not the wisecrack volunteered by Mr. Launder, why the Screenwriters have no minimum salaries laid down.

In our new agreement with the British Film Producers Association, which is about to be signed, screen writers are treated the same as other technicians as far as providing for minimum salary standards, working conditions and so on, are concerned. In the same way for years we have covered screen writers in agreements reached with the appropriate employers' federations on the shorts and specialised side of the industry, and with the Government (on behalf of the Crown and Colonial Film Units), and other employers outside the employers' federations. Whilst of course the Screenwriters Association has done useful work on the question of screen credits and other matters men-

tioned by Mr. Launder we would resist any attempt by a non-trade union organisation today to usurp certain functions of a trade union organisation.

Mr. Launder also made reference to the Screenwriters Association giving its support to the admission of any foreign writer to work in this country; maybe that is so, but the policy of the Ministry of Labour is to seek the views primarily of the appropriate trade unions. We, therefore, would have to be consulted, and past experience has shown that the Ministry views with considerable sympathy any views expressed by this union.

Further, there is a Joint Committee, set up by the British Film Producers Association and ourselves, which considers every application for employment in this country and the Ministry of Labour invariably accepts the advice of that Committee. Therefore, your members should think twice before acting on the implication of Mr. Launder's statement that any writer who turns up in this country will have no difficulty in working.

It should of course be made clear, as I believe your members know, that this union, like the British trade union movement generally, is internationalist in its outlook and the main cause of any difficulties which arise on the question of Labour Permits is because we are asked to give permission to admit foreign technicians over here whilst the countries from which those technicians come preclude most of the

grades of our membership from working in their film industries.

The ideal solution is reciprocity agreements, like we have negotiated with the French, Swiss and Czech trade unions, which provide for a controlled flow of all technical workers from one country to the other. Unfortunately the American unions on the whole have so far failed to respond to any approaches from us for similar agreements. If, therefore, your members do experience difficulty in working here I hope this letter will explain the reason to them, and help them to appreciate it, but we look forward to the day, and any help your Association can give would be appreciated, when by international agreement between the trade unions of all film producing countries there will be a regular flow under trade union agreement of technicians in all grades from one country to another.

GEO. H. ELVIN,  
General Secretary.

*A copy of Mr. Elvin's letter, which was received late in May, was sent to Frank Launder, president of the Screenwriters Association in London. Mr. Launder, who was recently a guest of the SWG and addressed a membership meeting in Hollywood, has sent the following reply:*

I thank you for sending me a copy of Mr. Elvin's letter. The following are the facts:

The Association of Cine-Technicians represents a number of Shorts



and Documentary writers, many of whom are also Shorts directors, producers or editors. A proportion of these, in their capacity as writers, are at the same time members of the Screenwriters Association. The A. C. T. also represents several feature writers, whose sole business is writing. We have not been able to discover the number, but we do not think it is more than six. The A.C.T. further represents a number of writer-directors and associate producer-writers in their capacity as directors or associate-producers.

The Screenwriters Association represents 99% of the screenwriters engaged in feature production in this country. It also has some two hundred associate members (young or new writers without the qualification for full membership).

A recent referendum taken by the Screenwriters Association on the motion that this Association should become an autonomous section of the A.C.T. resulted in the defeat of the motion by an overwhelming majority. I believe I made it quite clear at the cocktail party the Guild kindly gave me in Hollywood that the Screenwriters Association is not a trade union, but we are the only organisation in this country that can claim (other than farcically) to represent the interests of British screenwriters, trade union or otherwise.

Our members believe that writing is international, and it has always been the policy of this Association to welcome to this country writing talent from abroad. The relevant Government departments continue to consult us whenever the question arises of a permit being granted for a foreign writer to work in this country. It is news to us that Government Departments also refer these matters to the A.C.T.

The agreement which the A.C.T. are negotiating with the British Film Producers Association contains no minimum salary clause for screenwriters, or indeed any reference to writers' salaries whatsoever, and we took the precaution at the outset of advising the B.F.P.A. that our members would not be a party to any agreement between the A.C.T. and B.F.P.A. which embraced stipulations regarding writers' salaries.

As for the suggestion in Mr. Elvin's letter that only a trade union is empowered to negotiate agreements

covering fees and salaries, this is a revelation to us, and it is a contention which I am sure the members of this Association would resist most strongly.

At this very moment, the Screenwriters Association has joined with the bodies to which it is affiliated (the Society of Authors and the League of British Dramatists) in negotiating with the British Broadcasting Corporation a new scale of fees for radio writers, and neither the Society of Authors, nor the League of British Dramatists is a trade union in the accepted sense.

I would not like the members of the Guild to suppose for one moment that the Screenwriters Association is a reactionary organisation. It is not concerned with politics and, in fact, embraces members of all shades of political opinion, from the extreme right to the extreme left. Our first President was Sir Alan Herbert, who is somewhere in the political mid-air. Our second was Mr. J. B. Priestley, who might be described as a very individual leftist, and our last Vice-President was Mr. Frederick Bellenger, now War Minister in the Labour Government. If Guild members would like a personal view of the tendencies of the hard core of the Screenwriters Association, I would say that they are neither reactionary Conservatives nor reactionary Trade Unionists, but just simple, progressive, benevolent anarchists.

FRANK LAUNDER,  
President.

*Several months ago Mr. C. P. Wang and Mr. S. W. Shu, Chinese writers, were in Hollywood and were guests at a joint meeting of members of the SWG and the Hollywood Writers Mobilization. They described the suffering of writers in China, and several Guild members wrote checks which were to be forwarded to the Chinese Writers Association. Subsequently these checks were returned to the Guild by Chinese representatives in New York with the information that the safe transmission of the money to China was difficult at that time. So the checks were returned to the persons who had written them.*

Now **THE SCREEN WRITER** has received this letter from Mr. S. T. Yeh, acting president of the Chinese Writers Association, appealing for

*help in the form of money, clothing and books:*

From the letter of our president Mr. Shu She-yu and the report of Mr. Wan Chia-Pao who came back recently, we have learnt with gratitude that the Screen Writers' Guild, Inc. have kindly offered to help their Chinese colleagues who are now living under the most wretched conditions. We are deeply moved by the warmth of your friendship.

The Chinese writers suffered greatly during the war years. But since victory, our conditions have considerably worsened even compared with the war years. Some can't even afford to have medical attendance when ill. Such facts can not be found in the daily press but they are all the same true. Yet we have never appealed for help from abroad, because the tribulation is not confined to writers. The entire Chinese people are struggling below starvation line in the midst of chaos and interminable bloodshed. Determined to share the same fate with them, how can we attempt to escape? Nevertheless, we have decided to accept the assistance so voluntarily offered by you and would wish to express our heartfelt thanks. Needless to say, we wish to keep still closer contact with you.

Will you entrust the sum you wish to present us to our representative Mr. Shu She-yu, (address c/o Mr. George Kao, Chinese News Service, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, N. Y. 20, N. Y.) or our associate Miss Yang Kang (address: 52, Smith Terrace, Staten Island, N. Y.) They will find a way of sending it back to us. We would also welcome clothing or books.

With renewed thanks for your generous assistance and friendship,

Yours fraternally,  
**CHINESE WRITER'S  
ASSOCIATION**  
No. 5, Passage 482, Kien Kwo  
Eastern Road,  
Shanghai, China.  
Acting President, S. T. Yeh.  
Secretary, Mai Lin.

## Two Letters From London

(Continued from Index Page)

country but in the other international centres of film production.

How heartily do I agree with Fritz



Lang when he talks about the "strange hybrid labelled Hollywood," which is so far removed, as he says, not only from Hollywood but even from American life.

Indeed what has given British films the prestige that they have now acquired has been caused, more than by anything else, by the isolation of a country besieged, which has brought forth a type of film which is national in the best sense, reflecting the life and soul of the country of its origin.

But art may spring from national character yet require the stimulus of the world outside. I am one of those British producers who refuse to become complacent about our films as the result of a few successes and to those of my colleagues in the British industry whom I suspect of too great an optimism, I have always given the warning that such fine American technicians as Capra, Wyler, Stevens, Ford, etc., will come back to their civilian occupation after their war careers greatly stimulated by their contact with the world outside America—a stimulus which is bound to reflect in their creative work.

We are already seeing this benefit in American films, but how tragic to think that it requires a war to make that contact and stimulus possible. The plan under discussion now promises well to provide that necessary broadening of horizons in times of peace. It should materially benefit the quality of films in all the countries concerned.

MICHAEL BALCON

*The following London letter has been received from Guy Morgan:*

WE have enjoyed a period of considerable activity during the last few months.

Our proposals for new film legislation were presented to the Board of Trade in concert with those of other sections of the industry. Technicalities of renters' and exhibitors' quota do not make good transatlantic gossip, but our proposals may be roughly summed up as a valiant and drastic attempt to invert the pyramid of the

British film industry so that control is from producer to renter and exhibitor (as in Hollywood, so we believe), instead of as at present from renter-plus-exhibitor to producer. We also aim to encourage competition rather than to stifle it.

Our new Screen Credits' Agreement has been successfully negotiated with the British Film Producers' Association, the principal modification being to make it obligatory upon producers to notify all participants in the writing of a film and also to notify the Association of the provisional list of writing credits 28 days before the printing of the Title Cards. This was designed to prevent disputes arising when it was too late to rectify any omissions on the screen.

The principle that the writer's name should be mentioned in studio advertising wherever the director's name is mentioned, and in the same-sized type, was reaffirmed, and we are now approaching the renters to obtain a similar agreement with regard to Lay Press advertising. Studio advertising is, of course, concerned with Trade Press only.

Our Arbitration Committee adjudicated in one case of disputed credit and their decision was in favour of the producer. (It is worth noting that our Arbitration Committee is chosen by screenwriters and consists of screenwriters only, but their decisions are accepted by the Producers' Association as final.)

We also fought a case on behalf of a screenwriter who received one month's notice after working 17 months on a year's contract which had been allowed to overrun without renewal. Counsel's opinion was that we might reasonably claim "custom" of three months' notice, but that six months was doubtful. The company agreed to settle for three months' notice.

In order to get a little more money in our kitty we have instituted a levy on members' screen-credits on feature films. At present it is set at 25 dollars for the first credit in any year, 10 dollars for the second, with a maximum of 50 dollars for any one year.

We have instituted a Registration Scheme for original screen material under the Association's stamp, modelled on the scheme current in Hollywood. Up to the present any writer wishing to get a birth-certificate for

a brain-child had to nominate a friendly producer as godfather in order to take advantage of the British Film Producers' Registration Bureau.

We organised a screenwriters' quiz to obtain the vital statistics of the British field, and though the replies have not yet been fully collated, they are making very good reading. It was heartwarming to note that whereas the first return opened answered the question, "Would you describe yourself as a whole-time screenwriter?" with—"Yes—unfortunately," the second return opened answered it "No—unfortunately." Our admiration, too, went out to the screenwriter who, to the leading question "What in your opinion is the practice of current film production that most adversely affects the prestige of the screenwriter?," replied succinctly, "Bad screenwriting."

But perhaps the most important step taken is on the social side. In the next six weeks we hope to add the legend "Screenwriters' Club" to the social amenities of Park Lane, and open our doors to all those engaged at the creative level in the British film industry. In addition to the usual amenities, alcoholic and gastronomic, we propose to hold regular meetings, dinners, and discussions, annual entertainments to critics etc.; start a Script Library and Film Reference Library; when equipment is available, to show old films of technical merit on 16 mm.; and, of course, which is most important, to offer suitable hospitality and escape from "the death by a thousand cuts" to visiting members of the Screen Writers' Guild.

#### A.A.A. NOTE.

At a recent Extraordinary General Meeting, a motion of sympathy with the aims of the American Authors Authority was passed by unanimous vote.

Points arising from the discussion: British screenwriters are in many ways more favourably placed than American screenwriters in the sale of original screen material. An increasing readiness by British film producers to purchase a licence to produce (usually within ten years) and to concede the separation of secondary rights was reported by a member of the Association who is also a leading agent.

In spite of the fact that under the British Copyright Act of 1911 everything written under a "service contract" belongs to the employer, even

*GUY MORGAN is Honorable Secretary and a member of the Council of The Screenwriters' Association of London. His letter to THE SCREEN WRITER concerns recent activities of the British organization of screenwriters.*



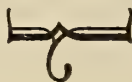
in cases of service contracts British producers are frequently willing to grant the writer of an original screen story play, serial, novel, and radio rights, reserving only the right to publish up to 10,000 words for publicity purposes. American companies

producing in England do not grant such rights.

It has therefore been decided to organise a joint deputation representing the Society of Authors, the League of Dramatists, the Composers' Guild, and the Screenwriters' Asso-

ciation to approach the British Film Producers' Association with a view to establishing the principle of purchase of licence and separation of secondary rights in all contracts for the purchase of original screen material.

GUY MORGAN



## *Books: A Review of George Middleton's Autobiography*

THESE THINGS ARE MINE by George Middleton. Macmillan \$5.00.

WRITERS can take heart from a lot of warm hearted things in George Middleton's autobiography. The playwright, who fought so hard to establish the Dramatists Guild and its Minimum Basic Agreement, recreates the American scene—and a good deal of the European scene—with a special glow all his own. They are all here, from Mansfield to Mrs. Pat Campbell, from Shaw to Sacha Guitry, from Tammany Hall to Senator Bob LaFollette and Mr. Justice Louis Brandeis.

Most fascinating of all this material, however, are the chapters on the organization of the Dramatists Guild and Mr. Middleton's adventures abroad in signing up Pinero, Barrie, Shaw and others as members of the Guild. Screen writers, playwrights, novelists, radio writers, currently involved in the fight for the licensing program, can read with profit and exhilaration the accounts of how the Theatre Trust in New York literally precipitated the first agreement of the Dramatists Guild.

Do these words sound familiar:

"Who hung up the rules by which the script was cast or staged? Did power alone have the final say as to the integrity of his text? Did the circumstances under which it was produced bring out its essential qualities, help or hurt it? Did the author get

his full penny's worth out of his occasional successes so that he could eat out of any of his legitimate rights? What were his rights anyway?"

No, these words are not from the latest prospectus on the best way to license original material for the screen in 1947. These are Mr. Middleton's words in surveying the situation of the playwright as it prevailed in the Broadway theatre in the year 1925. These were the times when the William A. Brady office eked out a successful twenty-two year run of Lottie Blair Parker's *Way Down East* and had rolled up the amazing total gross of \$14,000,000. Will it be any surprise to hear Mr. Middleton's report that Lottie Blair Parker had disposed of all her rights outright for \$5,000?

It was a short fight but a merry one. On April 27, 1926 the first Basic Agreement for dramatists had been signed by all managers except one and the Dramatists Guild was an established fact. Everyone was satisfied—that is, everyone on the dramatists' side of the house—with the natural exception of George Bernard Shaw. Mr. Shaw, an amiable dissenter, was solid with the Guild all the way, but he had a few thoughts on separation of rights that are worth repeating today.

In 1933 Mr. Shaw was writing Mr. Middleton in violent protest against any agreement which permitted the Broadway manager to share in anything except the returns from

the theatre engagement. In part, Mr. Shaw said:

Instead of resolutely keeping our various rights separate and independent, and giving no countenance to the assumption that a manager with a performing right is entitled to a rake-off on the film rights and all the other rights he has ever heard of, the wretched League actually draws up a Basic Agreement in which this assumption is recognized, accepted, and regulated.

Why is it that an American cannot believe in the possibility of any business transaction being possible until he has induced half a dozen totally unconnected and irrelevant persons to accept a rake-off on it?

Does all this have a vaguely familiar ring as screen writers, radio writers, playwrights and novelists begin to ask the producers of films some similar questions today?

As Mr. Middleton wisely points out, there was some sound economic fact in the theatre which justified the practice of cutting the manager in for fifty per cent, a share which has recently been reduced to forty per cent. But as we here in Hollywood talk and fight for seven-year licensing, reversion of rights, separation of rights, and participation in reissues, there is a mocking eloquence and relevance in the Shaw dialogue which lingers on the Hollywood sound track long after you put down Mr. Middleton's book.

Why, Mr. Shaw asks, should any right be disposed of to a man not prepared to exploit it? Why indeed?

These are only a few of the many sparks that are struck from the wheel of memory as Mr. Middleton takes us from his boyhood days in Paterson up through the era of Julia Marlow in New York, his collaborations with Guy Bolton, his many campaigns for the Dramatists Guild, his marriage to Fola LaFollette, his affectionate rela-

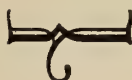
tionship with the great liberal from Wisconsin who was his father-in-law, and the three years he spent in Hollywood as a producer.

George Middleton has done many good turns for the theatre and this is one of them. If, as he once said of himself, he "always had too many indignations" it has been a good thing for the members of the Dramatists Guild and writers everywhere. We owe a great deal to him and we con-

tinue to be in his debt. Today, as during the war years, he continues to serve at Washington in the Office of Alien Property, Department of Justice, functioning as a trade specialist on international copyright problems.

Here is a playwright who in his time has played many parts. All of them were good and the best of them is a superlative play on Balzac titled *That Was Balzac*.

EMMET LAVERY



## Opinions on Writer Employment

# New Blood, or the Arteries Seem to be Frozen

DAVID R. MOSS

(Mr. Moss, who sent the following brief article to *THE SCREEN WRITER*, is a young novelist and short story writer. A copy of his article was submitted to several studio story editors, who were asked to comment on it. Their comments follow the article.)

HOW sincere are the doctors of the movie industry?

Just how anemic is the patient?

Of late, there has been a great to-do and noise about the need in Hollywood for *new blood*, for *new* writers, full of *new* ideas, *new* creative talent. And the cry is heard not from one lone focal point, but on all sides. In newspapers, in magazines, on the radio, at Guild meetings, at lectures and debates. Everyone, it seems, is searching for this *new blood*!

But as one of the thousands of unknown writers in Hollywood, living on peanuts and waiting for a miracle, I'm beginning to grow just a little weary of these pseudo-medical confabs, to wonder if the blood transfusion is really so necessary after all, to

suspect that this hullabaloo is just as much of a phase and fad as Sinatra bow ties in the 40s and raccoon coats in the 20s. I'm beginning to grow tired of "reading" about the need, knowing full well that it's merely lip service, that the men issuing the pleas are only weekend luncheon speakers, who, come Monday morning, will report back to their offices, with explicit instructions to their two million secretaries to admit no one, to answer all letters with stock replies that say next to nothing.

If Hollywood is really so completely run down and exhausted, so anxious for a physical overhauling, why isn't someone *doing* something about it? Why hasn't someone taken concrete measures to set up an organization or form an outlet for struggling writers? Not a red carpet affair, where we can do nothing but loaf all day on expensive Movieville salaries, or a PEC, where the courses, though Grade A in quality, are actually nothing but a lecture series; but a channel where we *new blooders* can earn the money that supplies the necessary nourishment to keep our corpuscles and plasma in running order. Some-

thing, in other words, akin to the junior writer departments which the studios recently abolished because, for some strange reason, they seemed to feel that their health was beyond improvement.

If we messiahs of a new literary era in Hollywood are really so vital, why are we still laboring as shoe clerks and stenographers, waitresses and soda jerks. Sure, we know all the familiar clichés. "Get yourself an agent." "You need more experience." "We take only trained writers." "Our staff is full." "Come back in six months." But we were under the impression, we members of the New Blood Society, that the internes and medicos of moviedom considered us indispensable now, not next fall or next winter or next year, felt that the hemorrhage is too acute for such long and unnecessary delays!

There is no shortage of new blood in Hollywood, no need to bewail its scarcity. Rather, the shortage lies in the numebr of opportunities open to those possessing this magical liquid potion. There are too many blood clots preventing any free and uninterrupted flow of talent, even though the



pores of the city are oozing with it. It's here from every part of the country, and it's good. Send out a *call* for this *new blood* — a definite call, mind you, not an abstract plea — and see what results take place.

Or have the arteries of the film world hardened so completely and thoroughly that there really is no chance or need for "new blood?"

*Following are the comments of three story editors at major Hollywood studios:*

**T**RANSFUSIONS are performed, usually, a pint at a time and are preceded by blood-typing tests. Type O is relatively rare. However, Warners has occasionally squeezed a pint or so of the stuff into its veins.

Some months ago Mr. Moss, in a letter dated February 12, 1947, offered us some of his. He believes he has type O and he may be right. We answered his letter and gave him an interview. Since he had arrived in California the preceding week, the two million secretaries he mentions must not have given him too much trouble.

There is unfortunately no automatic way of verifying a donor's self-appraisal. Studios in need of a quick pint, therefore, are apt, as a first step, to telephone a blood bank (forgive us, agents, for burdening you with a new epithet, but metaphor-breakers are subject to penalty as noted in Section 3, Code 6 of Palmers Correspondence Course, and elsewhere).

You're still being tested, Mr. Moss. So far, you have A's on metaphor, literacy and persistence. Almost cer-

tainly Hollywood will soon be having your blood. And at this point if any brother feels an urge to carry our metagore farther, he may dip pen in plasma and write his own tag.

FINLAY McDERMID,  
Story Editor, Warner Bros.  
Pictures, Inc.

**T**O Mr. David Moss and all the other young writers in Hollywood who are finding the going rough — my sincerest sympathy. Also a reminder that studio story departments are not just chopping blocks, as new writers may mistakenly — yet understandably believe. Story departments are well aware of their problems, and there is exactly nothing they can do about it — until the new writers do something about it themselves.

To the charge that there is a shortage of opportunities for new writers in Hollywood, it can only be pointed out that there are, and always have been, a few young writers who make their own opportunities. This has always been the case, and not only in Hollywood.

Mr. Moss states that there is new writing blood here from every part of the country and that it is good. Studio story departments would like nothing better than to believe this — but they need proof. It is up to the new writing blood to furnish such proof by writing material good enough to convince agents, story departments, and individual producers that they have something to offer.

There is always the old charge that it is almost impossible for new writers to submit their material, that agents are as tough to reach as the studios

themselves. To this, it can only be pointed out that nearly every successful writer in Hollywood has at some time faced this situation and surmounted it. In other words, it takes more than just new blood to get ahead as a writer in Hollywood. It takes real writing ability — and guts.

WILLIAM NUTT,  
Story Editor,  
RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.

**W**ITH reference to the article on *New Blood* by David Moss, it is indeed regrettable that Mr. Moss and others like him are meeting with such difficulty in Hollywood.

Part of that difficulty is perhaps due to misinformation, because if the impression is current that there's a wild hue and cry for new blood *per se* in the industry, then that impression is in error.

New writing blood in the industry is after all only of collateral value. The prime need is for new material, and for writers, new or old, capable of creating and developing it.

Every studio in town at all times has very concrete needs, and will welcome anyone who can meet them. One need only inquire to learn what they are. In helping to solve some of the studios' problems, the writer will automatically solve his own.

The matter of junior writers, assignments of newcomers to costly projects, etc., would take much more than the 200 word limit set for this reply. However, I shall be glad to go into it at some later date.

RICHARD SOKOLOVE,  
Head of Story Department,  
Paramount Pictures Inc.

## News Notes

\*Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture Series are: The Psychological Drama (II): Crime and Punishment, July 4, 5, 6; The Moving Camera (I): Hamlet, The Last Laugh, July 7, 8, 9, 10; The Psychological Drama (III): Nju, July 11, 12, 13; Pabst and Realism (I): The Treasure, July 14, 15, 16,

17; The Moving Camera (II): Variety, July 18, 19, 20; The Films of Fritz Lang (III): Metropolis, July 21, 22, 23, 24; The Advance Guard: Ghosts Before Breakfast, Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt, Uberfall, July 25, 26, 27; Pabst and Realism (II): The Love of Jeanne Ney, July 28, 29, 30, 31; The End of the Silent Era: Rasputin, August 1, 2, 3.

\*SWG member Stanley Richards' one-act play, *Mood Piece*, is scheduled for publication early this summer by the Banner Play Bureau of San Francisco. Mr. Richards' one-act play *District of Columbia*, dealing with racial intolerance, was recently produced at Southwestern College in Winfield, Kansas.

\*SWG member Donald Kent

Stanford has a story in the June Red-book, and a new novel scheduled for publication later in the year.

★Early South American and British publication have been arranged for *The Glass Room*, recent novel by SWG members Edwin Rolfe and Lester Fuller, which Rinehart & Co. published early in the year. In addition, a Bantam Book edition is scheduled for publication late in 1947 or early in 1948, coincident with national release of the film based on the book, which the authors scripted for Warners.

★SWG member Stewart Sterling's new mystery novel, *Dead Wrong: The Affair of the Virginia Widow*, has just been published by J. B. Lipincott Co.

★George Freedley, curator of the N. Y. Public Library Theatre Collection, spoke at the Assistance League Playhouse June 19 on the American national theatre and current New York productions. The event was sponsored by the Theatre Library Association.

★*Murder in a Lighter Vein*, latest mystery novel by SWG member Milton M. Raison, was published June 25 by Murray & Gee of Hollywood.

★Whittlesey House announces that a new novel, *White Crocus*, by SWG member Peter Packer will be published in September. Mr. Packer is currently working on another novel, *The Inward Voyage*, for the same publishers.

★SWG member Leo Mittler is now supervisor of the Dramatic Workshop of the New School for Social Research in N. Y. He has also been engaged by the United Nations to write a six reel documentary showing the new U. N. headquarters building.

★The Bureau for Inter-cultural Education in its first quarter-annual national prize contest for the best published magazine stories has award-

ed second prize and a check for \$500 to SWG member Fred Schiller for his McCall's-Blue Book story, *Ten Men and a Prayer*. First prize was won by *Gentlemen's Agreement*, written by Laura Z. Hobson, formerly of the SWG and now transferred to the Authors' Guild.

★The Peoples Educational Center begins its Summer Term the week of July 14th, 1947. The Friday Night Film Series at the Screen Cartoonists Hall will continue. The title of the series is, Film Portraits: Of Countries and Their People. The aim of the series is to show the reflection of the customs and habits of different countries in the treatment of real or fictitious characters. Among the pictures lined up are Abraham Lincoln, Passion of Joan of Arc, The Marseillaise, Youth of Maxim, Carneval in Flanders, and others. The writing courses include Screen I, given by Hal Smith; Screen II, Carl Foreman; and Screen III, Gordon Kahn. Radio Writing Comedy is a guest lecture course with Jack Robinson and Frederick Jackson Stanley. Other writing courses are Creative Writing, Basic Journalism, Modern Novel, Mystery Story and Publicity and Public Relations.

Special courses include How To Read a Book, a literary appreciation course given by Alvah Bessie; Modern Architecture and Community Planning Today; Art Appreciation and The Theater and Its History. Registration for all classes begins June 30th and a full descriptive catalogue of all courses may be obtained by writing or phoning the Peoples Educational Center, 1717 North Vine St., HOLLYWOOD 6291.

★Current issue of the *Hollywood Quarterly*, published by the University of California Press under the joint sponsorship of the University and the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization, carries as its leading article an analysis by Robert A. Brady, U. of C. (Berkeley), professor of economics,

of monopoly drives for control of the mass agencies of communication, including motion pictures.

Covering the film field are articles by Marie Rose Oliver, Abraham Polonsky, Siegfried Kracauer, Vladimir Pozner, Richard Rowland, Newton E. Meltzer, Herbert F. Margolis. In the radio field, Norman Corwin's *One World Flight* is published in script form, with an introductory note by Jerome Lawrence. In music, Frederick W. Sternfeld contributes an article, *The Strange Music of Martha Ivers*.

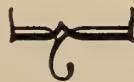
In the foreign film field, Roger Manvell considers the condition of the cinema in England, and Christina and Eugene CenKalski write about films in Poland.

There are other contributions from Robert Rahtz, Albert N. Williams, Louis Ganton, Marcia Endore, John Paxton, Harry Hoiyer, Franklin Fearing, Sam Moore, John Collier, L. S. Becker, Harold J. Salemson, and a breakdown of types of feature films for 1944, 1945 and 1946.

★The second presentation of Pelican Productions at the Coronet Theatre will be the world premiere of Berthold Brecht's play, *Galileo*, starring Charles Laughton in the title role, with T. Edward Hambleton producing and Joseph Losey directing, and scheduled to open in July.

The play was written by Brecht during his residence in Denmark, whence he'd escaped from Germany, in 1939. Charles Laughton first became interested in the play about two years ago. Since that time he has been working with Brecht in the hope that he might be able to procure an English adaptation in which he would appear. Ultimately, it was decided that Laughton himself would write the adaptation of the play as it will be presented on the Coronet stage.

*Galileo* has fourteen scenes and two acts. Robert Davison has designed the sets after voluminous research in an effort to capture the atmosphere of the early 17th century Italy.





A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

MAY 1, 1947 TO JUNE 1, 1947

A

ROBERT D. ANDREWS

Joint Screenplay (with Ben Madow) THE MAN FROM COLORADO, Col

EDNA ANHALT

Joint Screenplay (with Edward Anhalt) BULLDOG DRUMMOND STRIKES BACK, Col

EDWARD ANHALT

Joint Screenplay (with Edna Anhalt) BULLDOG DRUMMOND STRIKES BACK, Col

B

D. D. BEAUCHAMP

Joint Story Basis (with William Bowers) THE WISTFUL WIDOW OF WAGON GAP, Uni

ARNOLD BELGARD

Sole Screenplay THE INVISIBLE WALL, (Sol M. Wurtzel) Fox

MARTIN BERKELEY

Sole Screenplay GREEN GRASS OF WYOMING, Fox

WILLIAM BOWERS

Joint Story Basis (with D. D. Beauchamp) THE WISTFUL WIDOW OF WAGON GAP, Uni

GEORGE BRANDT

Sole Original Screenplay UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS, L 6-5 (S) Par  
Sole Original Screenplay POPULAR SCIENCE, J 6-6 (S) Par

C

VERA CASPARY

Novel Basis and Joint Screenplay (with Herbert Victor) BEDELIA (John Corfield) Eagle-Lion

LESLIE CHARTERIS

\*Contributor to Screenplay Construction TARZAN AND THE HUNTRESS (Sol Lesser) RKO

BORDEN CHASE

Sole Original Story THE MAN FROM COLORADO, Col

J. BENTON CHENEY

Sole Original Screenplay LAND OF THE LAWLESS, Mono

ROBERT CHURCHILL

Sole Original Story and Joint Screenplay (with Scott Darling and Crane Wilbur) BORN TO SPEED, PRC

ROYAL K. COLE

Joint Screenplay (with Charles Moran) EXPOSED, Rep  
Sole Screenplay BLACKMAIL, Rep  
Joint Screenplay (with Lewis Clay, Arthur Hoerl and Leslie Swabacker) JACK ARMSTRONG (Esskay) Col

D

SCOTT DARLING

Joint Screenplay (with Robert Churchill and Crane Wilbur) BORN TO SPEED, PRC

FRANK DAVIS

Joint Screenplay (with Martin Rackin) FIGHTING FATHER DUNNE (THE NEWSBOYS' HOME) RKO

RENAULT DUNCAN

Joint Original Screenplay (with Jack Dewitt) BELLS OF SAN FERNANDO, Screen Guild

PHILIP DUNNE

Sole Screenplay THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR, Fox

\*Academy Bulletin Only

E

SAUL ELKINS

Sole Original Screenplay THE MAN FROM NEW ORLEANS (S) WB

IRVING ELMAN

Sole Original Screenplay ROSES ARE RED, (Sol M. Wurtzel) Fox

F

STEVE FISHER

Sole Original Screenplay THE HUNTED, Allied Artists

PAUL FRANK

Joint Story Basis (with Howard J. Green) THE INVISIBLE WALL, (Sol M. Wurtzel), Fox

G

JOHN GRANT

Joint Screenplay (with Frederic I. Rinaldo and Robert Lees) THE WISTFUL WIDOW OF WAGON GAP, Uni

HOWARD J. GREEN

Joint Story Basis (with Paul Frank) THE INVISIBLE WALL, (Sol M. Wurtzel) Fox

H

BEN HECHT

Joint Original Screenplay (with Charles Lederer) HER HUSBAND'S AFFAIRS, Col

JOHN C. HIGGINS

Sole Screenplay TOMORROW YOU DIE, Eagle-Lion

CHARLES HOFFMAN

Additional Dialogue THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE, WB

J

RIAN JAMES

Sole Original Story LA OTRA (Mercurio Prod.) Clasa Films

K

GORDON KAHN

Sole Adaptation WHIPLASH, WB

L

CHARLES LEDERER

Joint Original Screenplay (with Ben Hecht) HER HUSBAND'S AFFAIRS, Col

ROBERT LEES

Joint Screenplay (with Frederic I. Rinaldo and John Grant) THE WISTFUL WIDOW OF WAGON GAP, Uni

WILLIAM R. LIPMAN

Sole Screenplay ALIAS A GENTLEMAN, MGM

MARY LOOS

Joint Original Screenplay (with Richard Sale) DRIFTWOOD, Rep

M

BEN MADOW

Joint Screenplay (with Robert D. Andrews) THE MAN FROM COLORADO, Col

EDWIN JUSTUS MAYER

\*Contributor to Dialogue THE FOXES OF HARROW, Fox

N

DUDLEY NICHOLS

Sole Screenplay THE FUGITIVE (Argosy Pic.) RKO

O

ARTHUR E. ORLOFF

Sole Screenplay and Joint Story Basis (with Brenda Weisberg) THE LONE WOLF IN LONDON, Col

R

MARTIN RACKIN

Joint Screenplay (with Frank Davis) FIGHTING FATHER DUNNE (THE NEWSBOYS' HOME) RKO

ELMER RICE

Play Basis DREAM GIRL, Par

FREDERIC I. RINALDO

Joint Screenplay (with Robert Lees and John Grant) THE WISTFUL WIDOW OF WAGON GAP, Uni

PETER RURIC

Sole Story Basis ALIAS A GENTLEMAN

TIM RYAN

Joint Original Screenplay (with Edmond Seward and Jerry Warner) BOWERY BUCKAROOS (Jan Grippio) Mono

S

RICHARD SALE

Joint Original Screenplay (with Mary Loos) DRIFTWOOD, Rep

ARTHUR SHEEKMAN

Sole Screenplay DREAM GIRL, Par

CHARLES SHOWS

Joint Original Screenplay (with Lou Lilly) IN LOVE (S) Par

Joint Original Screenplay (with Lou Lilly) OUR FRIENDS (S) Par

Joint Original Screenplay (with Lou Lilly) AINT NATURE GRAND? (S) Par

T

DWIGHT TAYLOR

\*Contributor to Dialogue, THE FOXES OF HARROW, Fox

LAWRENCE EDMOND TAYLOR

Sole Adaptation BULLDOG DRUMMOND STRIKES BACK, Col

CHARLES L. TEDFOR

Sole Original Screenplay SUN VALLEY FUN (S) WB

Sole Original Screenplay LIVING WITH LIONS (S) WB

WANDA TUCHOCK

Sole Screenplay THE FOXES OF HARROW, Fox

V

LASZLO VADNAY

Sole Original Story COPACABANA (David L. Hersh) UA

JOHN VAN DRUTEN

Sole Screenplay and Play Basis THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE, WB

W

GERTRUDE WALKER

Sole Original Story TOMORROW YOU DIE, Eagle-Lion

JERRY WARNER

Joint Original Screenplay (with Tim Ryan and Edmond Seward) BOWERY BUCKAROOS, (Jan Grippio) Mono

BRENDA WEISBERG

Joint Story Basis (with Arthur E. Orloff) THE LONE WOLF IN LONDON, Col

CRANE WILBUR

Joint Screenplay (with Scott Darling and Robert Churchill) BORN TO SPEED, PRC

In this listing of screen credits, published monthly in THE SCREEN WRITER, the following abbreviations are used: COL—Columbia Pictures Corporation; E-L—Eagle-Lion Studios; FOX—20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; GOLDWYN—Samuel Goldwyn Productions, Inc.; MGM—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios; MONO—Monogram Pictures Corporation; PAR—Paramount Pictures, Inc.; PRC—Producers Releasing Corporation of America; REP—Republic Productions, Inc.; RKO—RKO Radio Studios, Inc.; ROACH—Hal E. Roach Studio, Inc.; UA—United Artists Corporation; UNI-INT'L—Universal International Pictures; UWP—United World Pictures; WB—Warner Brothers Studios. (S) designates screen short.

# NEXT MONTH AND THEREAFTER

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

WILLIAM WYLER

F. HUGH HERBERT

EUGEN SHARIN

PHILIP STEVENSON

LESTER KOENIG

NOEL MEADOW

THEODORE STRAUSS

RICHARD G. HUBLER

LILLIAN BOS ROSS

WILLIAM ORNSTEIN

MORRIS E. COHN

ROY HUGGINS

PAUL GANGELIN

FRANK LAUNDER

JEAN BRY

And further articles by ROBERT ARDREY, SYDNEY BOX, HUGO BUTLER, I. A. L. DIAMOND, EARL FELTON, MARTIN FIELD, ARTHUR KOBER, STEPHEN LONGSTREET, ST. CLAIR McKELWAY, EMERIC PRESSBURGER, IRVING PICHEL, GEORGE SEATON, ARTHUR STRAWN, DALTON TRUMBO, PETER VIERTEL, JOSEPH WECHSBERG, and others.

AAA and Writers' Rights

Toward a New Realism

Subject: Bindle Biog

Disunion in Vienna

Where Credit Is Due

Gregg Toland: the Man and His Work

French Cinema in the U. S.

Camera Obscura

As I Remember Birdie

How One Movie Sale Was Made

Can't Scare the Movies

What Is a License of Literary Property?

Writers & Publishers

What's Happening to Our Jobs?

As the English See It

French Motion Picture School

## Special Announcement

Editors of THE SCREEN WRITER are setting up a sub-committee to explore the subject of writer employment in the motion picture industry, and to analyze both the facts concerning unemployment and the factors that contribute to it. This sub-committee will work closely with the SWG economic program committee.

This material will be co-ordinated and presented in an early issue as a definitive survey of the writer employment situation in Hollywood.

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Paul Elder & Company, 239 Post Street, San Francisco 8  
C. R. Graves — Farmers' Market, 6901 West 3rd St., Los Angeles 36  
Hollywood Book Store, 1749 N. Highland, Hollywood 28  
Hollywood News Service, Whitley & Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 28  
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People's Educational Center, 1717 N. Vine St., Hollywood 28  
Pickwick Bookshop, 6743 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood 28  
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Kamin Dance Bookshop and Gallery, 1365 Sixth Ave., at 56th St., New York 19  
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*PENNSYLVANIA:*

Books of the Theatre — R. Rowland Dearden, P. O. Box 245, Jenkintown

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Eason & Son, Ltd., 79-82 Middle Abbey Street, P. O. Box 42, Dublin

*ENGLAND:*

Carter's Bookshop, 51 Willesden Lane, London N.W. 6  
Literature Kiosk, Unity Theatre, London

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EFG English and Foreign Library and Book Shop, 28 Martin Pl., Sydney, N.S.W.

APR 10 1947

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GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Authors and  
Their Rights

Page 1

# Screen Writer

## **1% OF THE GROSS** ***An Economic Primer of Screen Writing***

A Survey of Factors Affecting the Present and Future Economic Outlook For Writers, Including Studies of Employment and Markets, by LESTER COLE, RING LARDNER, JR., PAUL GANGELIN, MARTIN FIELD, PHILIP STEVENSON, and Others.

***SPECIAL SECTION — Page 16***

ADRIAN SCOTT: *You Can't Do That!*

FRANK SCULLY: *Tully on Scully*

LESTER KOENIG: *Conference on Thought Control*

OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, 2ND: *Reply to Bernard Shaw*

ALFRED PALCA: *Drama in the Barn Belt*

JUDITH PODSELVER: *Letter From Brussels*

Vol. 3, No. 3

August, 1947

25c



Editorial • Report & Comment:  
Forum on Subversion in  
Hollywood; Conference on  
on Reissues; Authors' League  
Licensing Committee Report  
Summary and AAA Committee  
Reply • Book Review •  
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# Letter From Brussels

JUDITH PODSELMER, *French film critic and THE SCREEN WRITER'S correspondent in Paris, writes from Brussels about the international film festival recently held there.*

DEAR *Screen Writer*: When I left for Brussels, Paris seemed on the verge of a revolution: the heat was incredible, the electricity and the gas were gradually being shut off, the trains had stopped working. People were leaving town packed in army trucks as they had done during the exodus of 1940. I felt I was leaving before crucial events would start happening.

Brussels presented a startling contrast. Fleets of brand-new Chevrolet taxis carrying banners urging people to "See a Good British Film" were rushing past street vendors selling oranges and bananas — fruits which most Europeans have not tasted in a long while. Stores were packed with American imports, frigidaire, radios, clothes, shoes. Belgium had not sold the uranium and the tin of its Congo for peanuts: American plenty was ever present in Brussels, at American prices.

The already dazed guests of the Festival — which very generously handed out 4,200 meal-tickets and 650 room-billets for the month of June — became dizzy every day by scrupulously attending the numberless cocktail parties to which the various participants and the most important Belgian towns invited them. The U.S.A. entertained specially lavishly and repeatedly since they had their stars come in single number instead of whole bodies as the French and the British did. Successively Linda Darnell, Rita Hayworth, Ray Milland, William Wyler and Eric Johnston had the privilege of being mobbed by rabid Belgian fans.

Perhaps due to the fact that Belgium looks so much like a bridge-head of the USA in Europe, the whole

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# The Screen Writer

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GBS on the American Authors' Authority

# Authors and Their Rights

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

*GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, dean of living men of letters, in this article written specially for THE SCREEN WRITER presents a characteristically trenchant opinion on AAA and the rights of authorship.*

**W**HEN the Authors' League of America was founded I assumed that its capacity would be equal to its professions, and that I could make use of it as I do of the London Society of Authors.

The first thing the New York League did was to appoint a committee, not of authors, but of theatrical managers. This committee immediately ordained that managers and publishers should have a share in all rights belonging to authors.

After this proof of the League's incompetence I classed it as a hostile body, and took no further account of it, guessing that the American authors would sooner or later be intelligent enough to shake the dust of the League off their feet, and form a new professional association which would at least have some elementary knowledge of its proper business.

I gather from your letter that this has now occurred, and that the new body is called the American Authors' Authority. I will join it if and when it disentangles itself from the League.

The AAA will finally absorb the League if it proves a genuine fighting union. Meanwhile its membership should be confined to authors and playwrights who accept the following conditions:

Charities of any description must be excluded from the Association operations. All performances must be paid for at standard rates. Authors' charities should be made by them either directly or through some separate charitable organization like the British Royal Literary Fund.

The AAA shall not interfere with the artistic work of its members. It shall not read nor recommend their works. Its specific function is to counsel and protect them impartially in the buying and selling by which they live.

It shall no longer describe playwrights as dramatists. The term is now acquiring a sense in scientific aesthetics to which playwrights are not committed. Playwrights is the correct name.

The AAA shall insist on its members retaining all their rights intact, and exercising them by the granting of licenses to perform or publish for periods not exceeding five years, renewable subject to six months notice of revocation if either party so desires.

The AAA shall discountenance profit sharing agreements, tolerating them only when the disbursements and overheads are precisely defined and limited.

Members shall be warned that in law authors and playwrights employed to contribute to dictionaries, encyclopedias and the like, or to superintend the rehearsals of plays: in short, who are employees, acquire no rights. All rights belong to the employers.

The AAA shall prescribe minimum standard fees, and deal with any attempt on the part of its members to attract business by underselling these rates as a grave professional misdemeanor. To novices who object that unless they accept lower rates established authors will always be preferred to them, the AAA shall reply that in any case, rule or no rule, no publisher or manager will accept a work by an unknown author if he can get one by an established celebrity. This he cannot



## THE SCREEN WRITER

always nor often do. Publishers, managers, and dealers in copyright works of art generally, are as obliged to keep their businesses afloat with new books and plays as authors and playwrights are to have their works published and performed. When no established authors are available at the moment, the dealers must resort to beginners as stopgaps. The beginner is then in as strong an economic position as the celebrity. It is as stopgaps that beginners get their chance. Nothing they can do nor that the AAA can do can alter this.

The AAA shall be open to all authors and playwrights who accept its rules. The unperformed and unpublished can join provisionally as associates.

The following should be the minimum standard terms for playwrights:

*When the receipts exceed \$1500, the author's fee shall be at least 15 per cent on the gross; when they exceed \$500 and do not exceed \$1500, 10 per cent on the gross; when they exceed \$250 and do not exceed \$500, 7½ per cent on the gross; and when they do not exceed \$250, 5 per cent on the gross. Managers will please note that this does not mean 5 per cent on the first \$251, 7½ per cent on the next \$250, etc., etc. The sliding scale is exactly as stated. It applies equally to repertory productions, to productions for runs and tours, and to all performances whether amateur or professional, commercial or charitable, educational or artistic alike. Discounts can be arranged for short plays.*

*Licenses are not negotiable nor heritable nor transferrable by any method, and may be withdrawn should any public statement to the contrary be made or inspired by the licensee, or should any transaction in the nature of subletting be effected or proposed on the strength of them.*

(World Copyright by George Bernard Shaw)

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *The article by George Bernard Shaw expressing his opinions concerning the American Authors' Authority proposal was written for THE SCREEN WRITER as the result of a letter sent to him by Emmet Lavery, chairman of the Joint Over-All AAA Committee and president of SWG. In this letter Mr. Lavery said in part:*

**S**CREEN writers in America, joining with their brother novelists, radio writers and playwrights, are facing the fight of their lives.

They are trying to establish the principle of licensing,

**I**T is not possible to prescribe publishing contracts so precisely. Most books are dead after eighteen months or less. A few outlive their copyrights. Many authors are so desperately in need of ready money that they prefer liberal advances to high royalties. High royalties involve high retail prices. While the present circulation of books is so limited and expensive it is by no means the case that high royalties pay the author better than moderate ones. A royalty of a half cent per copy on a book priced at 20 cents may be more lucrative for both author and publisher than a royalty of 20% on the two and a half dollars book in which the older publishers deal. But though the figures vary, the rules apply.

Authors should never sign contracts without skilled advice and guidance. This cannot be had from lawyers, as copyright law is outside ordinary legal practice. A knowledge of it is confined to a few specialists whose point of view is not that of authors. Only a competent Professional Association can be depended on. Nearly all authors are temperamentally adverse to business affairs, and inept through lack of office training and legal knowledge. Rights which they throw away for an old song may be worth from twenty-five dollars to three hundred thousand. No other form of property has such potentialities, nor demands more skilled management and foresight.

**I** HAVE conducted my own business successfully for two-thirds of a century, and have served for ten years on the Executive Committee of the Society of Authors in London. If the AAA is conducted *contra mundum* on the lines I have indicated I will join it.

The existing articles are inadequate and incompatible with the independence of the AAA. Most of them are ridiculously superfluous, drawn up by amateurs who imagine that contracts and prospectuses and by-laws are legislative acts.

as against outright sale, in the fields of radio, television, film — trying to extend the principle which has worked so well in the theatre.

The opposition, as you can well imagine, is considerable. Motion picture studios, who still insist on describing themselves as the corporate "author" of all material written on their premises or to their order, see a wide variety of dangers. Similar reactions come from publishers who like to gobble up all the subsidiary rights in sight. And so it goes. . . .

We are called crackpots, Communists, day dreamers

because we don't like to sell our material outright, because we don't like to lump all copyrights together in one deal, because we would like our material back if it is not used and because we would like to share in any re-issues or re-makes of that material.

Being hardy souls, the name calling does not bother us. But we realize that we are in for a long struggle and a nasty one. Is there any word of advice that you would care to give us at this time—something that we could pass on to our members through *The Screen Writer*?

We realize and we appreciate that you won your own personal struggle single handed because you had the temerity and the doggedness to stick it out personally—a thing which many of our novelists and playwrights are already doing. But it will be a long battle if we wait for every man to win it for himself and so we are debating now various forms of collective action.

Here in the Screen Writers' Guild we have proposed a limited trusteeship within the Authors' League, called the American Authors' Authority, which would serve as an over-all umpire-in-chief, somewhat like the film negotiator of the Dramatists' Guild in New York. Other writers are inclined to favor an over-all Minimum Basic Agreement in all fields.

I am enclosing a special supplement of *The Screen*

*Writer*, which analyzes in detail the proposals involved in AAA.

We are, I know, a little late in this fight. The battle for personal identity and personal integrity should have been fought at the very birth of radio, television and films.

And it is true that those determined enough to win the battle for themselves *can* win it and *are* winning it every day. But our problem is, as it was in the Dramatists' Guild—how to win it for people who are not strong enough yet to win it for themselves.

*In a statement concerning Mr. Shaw's article and his suggestion that AAA be divorced from the Authors' League of America, Mr. Lavery says:*

WE are grateful to Mr. Shaw for his encouragement and stimulating analysis of the plan for the American Authors' Authority. But I must point out that we can hardly meet the condition imposed by Mr. Shaw. He says he will be with us all the way if we withdraw from the Authors' League, but that, of course is not possible. Our plan was conceived as an integral part of the League. Today, as always, the Screen Writers' Guild stands squarely with the other groups in the Authors' League—the Authors' Guild, the Radio Writers' Guild and the Dramatists' Guild.

## Oscar Hammerstein, 2nd, Replies to Bernard Shaw

*Oscar Hammerstein, 2nd, president of the Authors' League of America, comments in the following statement on George Bernard Shaw's remarks concerning AAA and the League:*

MR. SHAW, declaring that he will join the American Authors' Authority "if and when it disentangles itself from the League," thereafter adds many other conditions among which is elimination of the existing articles which he describes as "ridiculously superfluous and drawn up by amateurs."

What it adds up to is that Mr. Shaw is not stating a real desire to join the American Authors' Authority as it has been planned. He is stating merely that he is willing to have the American Authors' Authority join him if they meet his conditions. He states that he has served for ten years on the Executive Committee of the Authors' Society in London. The British playwrights have for many years suffered many injustices.

Their rewards and their rights have been far below the standard set by the Minimum Basic Contract of the Dramatists' Guild. They have recently attained better conditions by modeling their new contracts after ours, but they have by no means caught up to us.

As far as publishing contracts are concerned, Mr. Shaw seems to have little hope, one of his theories being that "most books are dead after eighteen months." Someone should tell him about the contract recently negotiated by our Authors' Guild and soon to be signed. If he cares to add to his somewhat meagre information on the Authors' League of America, he might also examine the advances made by our Radio Writers' Guild and compare them with what his Society of Authors in London has done.

Thus, if an author is hesitating between joining Mr. Shaw's own version of the American Authors' Authority or casting his lot with the Guilds of the Authors' League of America, I would suggest that we have better pies to sell at our counters.



# You Can't Do That!

ADRIAN SCOTT

*SWG member ADRIAN SCOTT, RKO producer of such films as Murder, My Sweet and Cornered, here discusses the making of Crossfire, the soon to be released picture which he produced for RKO. This article is based on a speech given by Mr. Scott at the Film Panel of the Conference Against Thought Control in the United States, held in Beverly Hills in July.*

I'D like to talk about *Crossfire*. As many of you know, it is the first picture that has been made which deals frankly and openly with the subject of anti-Semitism. I would like to tell you a little of its history first, focussing on the behind-the-scene problems and the pressures to which we — who made it — were subject.

The project was conceived some two years ago. A book, *The Brick Foxhole*, had been written by Richard Brooks, then in the uniform of the Marine Corps. *The Brick Foxhole* was melodrama. It was soldiers in wartime. It was an attack on native fascism — or the prejudices which exist in the American people which when organized lead very simply to native fascism. It was an angry book, written with passion rooted in war — “in a dislocated, neurotic moment in history.” While it did not exclusively deal with anti-Semitism, it nevertheless gave an opportunity to focus simply on anti-Semitism. It was a subject we wanted to do some thing about, it was a subject that needed public airing. And it was melodrama.

We had made several melodramas and were generally dissatisfied with the emptiness of the format, which in many ways is the most highly developed screen format. The screen had done melodramas well but mainly they were concerned with violence in pursuit of a jade necklace, a bejeweled falcon. The core of melodrama usually concerned itself with an innocuous object, without concern for reality although dressed in highly realistic trappings. Substituting a search for an anti-Semite instead of a jade necklace, at the same time investigating anti-Semitism, seemed to us to add dimension and meaning to melodrama, at the same time lending outlet for conviction.

This is all fine, theoretically. It was fine to talk about it, and it would be interesting to do; but, as you know, the working producer doesn't have the right to make what he wants. Neither does a writer. Nor a director. The problem was the okay from the Front

Office — that civilized monster which has no other concern but to think up devious ways to make you unhappy, or so you think. As producer, it was my job to go to the front office, which I did. At the time, William Dozier was the executive in charge.

I outlined the scheme to him — to make this picture at a minimum cost; in a short period of time, 23 days; to use people that we had confidence in who had never been given a chance; in brief, to make this highly controversial subject an exciting picture and an honest gamble. Dozier commented that he was worried about anti-Semitism; and though he had no sure way of knowing, he'd felt from his personal experiences that anti-Semitism had grown since Hitler's demise, rather than diminished. Dozier ordered an option taken on the material.

SO far, so good. We did some more thinking about it. Virginia Wright of the Los Angeles *Daily News* announced the project in a column. People called me. They said it would be fine if we could do it, but there was a long way to go to get it in production. People called Dmytryk, the director, and Paxton, the writer — with the same sort of mournful note in their voices. Some said it was wrong to do it in a melodramatic format. Some said, why do it? We were young. This picture could come later. We were sticking our necks out. It could be catastrophic. People not only said this to us — we said it to ourselves.

We left for England to make *So Well Remembered* and on the estate of Sir Oswald Mosely — now turned into a boarding house — we thought about *The Brick Foxhole* some more. We worried more about it than we thought about it. We wondered if they would really let us make it. I got a sinus attack for which a Harley Street specialist could not find a reason. Clearly, he was a quack. Johnny Paxton had some stomach trouble which he attributed to the English food although none of the rest of us had trouble at that time. Johnny

Paxton and I continued to kick the project around — with Dmytryk when he was free from his chores — and we managed (in these conferences which were to create *Crossfire*) to find a number of reasons why *Crossfire* couldn't be made.

First, it had never been done before. 2) They wouldn't let us do it. 3) Everybody says that pictures of this kind lose their shirts at the box office. Besides, motion pictures decline social responsibility. They have one responsibility only: to stockholders, to make them rich or richer. Sure-fire stuff is rule of thumb — legs, torsos, bosoms, shapely and magnificent, with or without talent, are the vestiture and investment of films, beyond which only the fool goes. Why be a fool? 4) This was the wrong way to do this subject. 5) Actors would not risk their reputations. 6) A number of exhibitors would refuse to play the picture. 7) This picture would hurt somebody's feelings. Probably some nice anti-Semite's. 8) This was not an effective way to combat anti-Semitism. It was much better not to talk about it. And having exhausted that, we continued discussions on the most effective way of making it.

We returned home in November of last year. The studio had gone through a change of administration. Peter Rathvon was in temporary charge of production, negotiating, as we later found out, with a new production head.

I was home from England a few days when I was told by the Story Department that there was a possibility that the option on *The Brick Foxhole* might be dropped.

About this time I had a series of X-rays on my stomach. Clearly, I'd fallen victim to the old producer complaint — ulcers. I drank horrid white liquid and a man with lead gloves poked me in the stomach and the damn fool couldn't find anything wrong.

I felt I was the victim of a plot and I said to nobody at all that they couldn't do this to me.

I was ready to have it out with Peter Rathvon. Incidentally, Rathvon is quite a man to have things out with — he is not only president of the production company, he is president of RKO theatres and also chairman of the board of directors of RKO. He speaks with some authority.

I told him about the project and he said it was very interesting and this was the first he'd heard of it. We all had been abroad. We had no opportunity to discuss it with him. Familiarizing himself with the lot, he'd run across *Brick Foxhole*, and assumed that I, on my own, would drop the option since it was about a moment in history which could be better analyzed several years hence. He had no objections to a picture on anti-Semitism. As a matter of fact, he thought it was a good idea. The sterility of general motion picture

production was something which bothered him — here was a good, useful way of introducing a new subject matter. He ordered the option to be renewed.

At about this time my ulcerous condition mysteriously abated.

WE started actual work on the screen play when Doré Schary was made head of production. Schary's record is known to all of you. It is a record generously laden with progressive picture making. But — now something else had to be considered. Schary was new. He had an extremely difficult job of reorganization facing him. Sure, he wanted to make pictures with a mature content. He was on record as saying this. But anti-Semitism was a different matter. This was an explosive subject. It would be highly embarrassing to present him with a decision of this nature a few weeks after arriving on the lot. Was it right to do it now? Maybe a few months from now? These were our nightmares.

The night after I sent Johnny Paxton's magnificent script to him, two sleeping pills didn't work. I arrived haggard the next morning — a little late. I learned that Mr. Schary had made an appointment with my secretary — I was due in his office in ten minutes. So I went up.

He said, "I think this will make a good picture. Let's go." Overnight, the lot was transformed into a unit for *Crossfire*. Every department swung into operation to meet the challenge of making an "A" picture on a "B" budget. Robert Young left Columbia at 12 o'clock, having finished one picture, and at 1 o'clock started *Crossfire*. Robert Mitchum cut short a vacation. Robert Ryan would have murdered anyone who prevented him from playing the part of the anti-Semite.

Conferences were held with Schary who made suggestions which improved the script. This, of course, is revolution, when it is necessary to admit into the record that the contributions of a studio head were not only used but welcomed. The picture went into production on a 23-day schedule. The photography by Roy Hunt was painstakingly faithful to the script values. Eddie Dmytryk brought it in on schedule and, most important, achieved his finest direction to date.

That is the story and these were the pressures we were subject to.

I have gone into the history of *Crossfire* at this length not for the purpose of examining *Crossfire* but to examine my colleagues and myself. For two years we feared not that we would not make a good picture but that we would not make a picture at all. Through all the long months before we started work fear consumed us. Why does this fear occur? Where does this fear come



from? It does not require complex medical opinion to discover the source.

It is a fear produced with a Hollywood trademark. Throughout its comparatively short history, Hollywood has been the victim of an infinite variety of lobbyists who claim the right to dictate what pictures shall be made and what the content of those pictures will be. As a result of these pressures a complex and subtle system of thought control has grown up around the industry. At times it is not so complex and not so subtle. And the newcomer, before he can successfully make his way, must not only become accustomed to this pattern, but must become a part. The producer's first consideration of any property is: "Can I get this by the Producer's Code?" Notice the wording: "Can I get it by?" It is not a deliberate thought process, it is a reflex action — that automatic. Similarly functions the writer and the director and the executive. And pity the poor cameraman who, because of the famous cleavage controversy, must not subvert the bosoms of American womanhood from two into one.

INCIDENTALLY, it is not my purpose here to estimate whether the individual or the industry is chiefly responsible for this fear among us. I am principally interested in the fact that it exists, in the fact that it does touch the individual and transforms his work into something he does not want it to be.

My colleagues and I are guilty. We imposed a censorship on ourselves in first considering a picture on anti-Semitism and during its preparation. There is nothing in the code of the Producers Association which prevents the making of *Crossfire*. The Producers Association, Mr. Breen in particular, applauded this picture. He felt it was a fine contribution, and went so far as to defend us against snide and ridiculous rumors. This fear — this self-imposed censorship resulting from fear — is not an isolated phenomenon confined to my colleagues and myself. It is a virus infecting all of us. It can cause creative senility, hackery and lousy pictures. It constitutes conservatism to the point of reaction. This creative reaction results in cliché thinking and cliché work and cliché pictures.

We are not, however, the cliché that we produce on the screen — we are not that hero — the strong American, rough, tender, witty, intelligent, unconquerable — except by the little school teacher from Boston. We are not the Clark Gable we write, direct and produce, who with his bare hands tears rich dynasties apart, with only Hedy Lamarr by his side. We are — rather — the wish fulfillment of this creation. We are, in fact, clichés compounding further clichés.

This fear is a state of mind and like a state of mind it is subject to change. It is not easy to change; it is

sometimes not profitable; on the other hand, it is sometimes immensely profitable. The enormous success of pictures honestly dealing with their subject is proof enough. But, I repeat, it is subject to change. It has changed in the past. Behind us, we have a record of picture making which has dignity and courage.

I WOULD like briefly to cite a few cases — pictures which were made in spite of the taboos:

*The Story of Louis Pasteur*, the great French scientist, was a realistic appraisal of the scientist. At the time it was held that you could not make a picture about a bug — about diseased cows — about hydrophobia and mad dogs and children suffering the ravages of the disease. Aspects of Pasteur were seized upon and made highly unattractive. The result we know — a biography of dignity, entertainingly telling the story of a man who in his day fought medical reaction.

*Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck. I do not know whether Darryl Zanuck, who produced this, was subject to pressure. It is quite conceivable that he was, but the mere fact of making this picture caused Mr. Zanuck to take a stand — against the abuse of people. That it was attacked when it was released is an established fact. That it was a fine and successful picture needs no elaboration.

There are others made in opposition to pressure: *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Mission to Moscow* and the pictures which depicted the gangster era. The part the gangster pictures played in causing legislation against prohibition is well known.

More recently, *Boomerang* and *The Farmer's Daughter* have been attacked, and *Best Years of Our Lives* — and to their everlasting credit, Samuel Goldwyn and Doré Schary have answered their attackers. During the preparation of *The Best Years*, it is conceivable that Mr. Goldwyn was told that he shouldn't make a picture about returning veterans — the people were tired of war, of soldiers in uniform, they wanted to forget, they wanted to think about something else — to be happy, joyful. If Mr. Goldwyn had listened he would not only have done himself and the public a rare disservice, he also would not have had the biggest grosser of the year.

These pictures, all of them, did not ask for revolution. They merely asked for an extension of democracy. They treated humanity with compassion — and this today is becoming a crime. This crime is something which the American people want. Their support of *Farmer's Daughter* and *The Best Years of Our Lives*, *Kingsblood Royal* and *Gentleman's Agreement* I submit as evidence. I have it on my own personal record from two preview audiences of *Crossfire*.

We received the largest number of cards ever

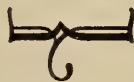
accorded an RKO picture in its two previews. Over 500 were received from the preview held at the RKO 86th Street Theatre — on the fringe of Yorkville, the old Fritz Kuhn district. Over 500 were received at RKO Hillstreet. 95% of the cards heartily approved *Crossfire*. An overwhelming majority liked those scenes best which directly come to grips with anti-Semitism. A great majority asked the screen to treat more subjects like this.

THAT tired, dreary ghost who has been haunting our halls, clanking his chains and moaning, "The people want only entertainment," can be laid to rest, once and for all. The American people have always wanted, and today more than ever want pictures which touch their lives, illuminate them, bring understanding. If we retreat now, because of our own doubts, not only do we do a great disservice to the American audience, but we do a most profound disservice to ourselves.

For this Fear we've become accustomed to — this

adjustment we have made to taboos — are the allies of the Thomas Committee, the Tenney Committee, and their stooges within and without the industry. Our Fear makes us beautiful targets — we are in the proper state of mind for the operation of these committees which, in pretending to defend, actually subvert our democratic way. We are magnificently adjusted to bans and ripe for more bans which inevitably will result if we allow it. There are supercilious cynics among us who conceivably could derive a singular pleasure from further bans on what we write, direct and produce. Further bans extend an already flourishing martyr complex — more reason to sit by, substituting luxury and creative locomotor ataxia for honest creative effort.

I believe we have a job to combat the controls which can lead only to more sterility in motion pictures and reaction generally. If we allow ourselves to be consumed by our fears, this can happen. While this marriage of reaction is going on, we've got to speak now — or we'll be forced to forever hold our peace.



## A World Audience for The Screen Writer

SWG member Jean Renoir's article, *Chaplin Among the Immortals*, published in the July issue of this magazine, is being widely reprinted in France.

William Wyler's article in the February issue, *No Magic Wand*, has been reprinted with credit in England, France, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Argentina and is appearing next month in *Filme*, the new Brazilian screen quarterly, for Brazilian and Portuguese readers.

Robert Shaw's article in the March issue, *A Package Deal in Film Opinions*, concerning Dr. George Gallup's movie audience research methods, has been reprinted with credit in two British magazines, in Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and Mexico.

Jay Richard Kennedy's article, *An Approach to Pictures*, in the June issue has aroused unusual interest both in the United States and abroad, and will probably be reprinted in several foreign film journals.

I. A. L. Diamond's *Hollywood Jabberwocky*, published in the June issue of this magazine, was reprinted with credit to Mr. Diamond and *The Screen Writer* in the June 23 issue of *Time*.

Other recent articles widely quoted or reprinted in the U.S.A. and abroad are I. G. Goldsmith's *Made in England*, James M. Cain's *Vincent Sargent Lawrence*, Millen Brand's *The Book Burners*, Vladimir Pozner's *Adult or Adulterated*, Harold Salemon's *The Camera as Narrator*, Rouben Mamoulian's *Stage & Screen*, Roland Kibbee's *Stop Me If You Wrote This Before*, and many parts of the Freedom of the Screen Section in the June issue.



# Scully on Tully

FRANK SCULLY

FRANK SCULLY, a member of SWG, is the author of many books including the *Fun In Bed* series and *Rogues' Gallery*. He has been a foreign correspondent and is now Hollywood correspondent and columnist for the New York edition of *Variety*. His friendship with Jim Tully was of long standing.

HE was a red-haired, red-faced Danton of the French Revolution cut down to a California commercial acre — the original hard-boiled Mr. Five by Five of life — but by the time he gave up the ghost and the boutonniere planters of the dead got their hands on him, he was bleached white and down to proportions nearer a sand swept city lot.

In his prime, his magnificent voice could talk your ears off, but for the last two years, he was down to whispers—most of his body paralyzed by Parkinson's disease and arteriosclerosis. He would stare for hours at the ceiling. When the nurse would approach him with a hypo he'd brush her off. All his life he had been a fighter, but an hour before he died on the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, Anno 1947, he finally decided to go quietly.

Contrary to general opinion *Emmett Lawler* was not Tully's first piece of creative writing. His fight record was. Boxers normally begin as preliminary boys and work up. Jim Tully began as a semi-finalist by the simple formula of having printed up a record of ten fights which had not taken place yet. They were all knockouts.

What he took later in the ring must have left a permanent trauma. He had a perpetually blood-shot eye and his story of a slug-nutty fighter in *The Bruiser* wasn't creative writing in the least. *Black Boy*, a play he wrote for Paul Robeson, also showed how serious he could be about the ring.

Of those fights not in the record books, John Gilbert's was the most hilarious. Upbraided for hitting a matinee idol, Tully said Gilbert was fanning himself to death. "So I put him to sleep for his own protection."

Today they lie on the same slope of Forest Lawn. Dreiser is there, too. This is really funny, because the writers at least had as much affinity for the place as Red Lewis when writing *Babbitt*. Maybe by now Lewis would love to be planted there too. People change.

The minister read *The House By The Side of The Road* and similar items hardly culled from *Laughter*

*In Hell*. I thought of a line of Jim's at the Strong Woman's funeral: "The audience looked bored with piety."

Afterward Fritz Tidden said to me: "It would have been a better service if the minister had read that chapter from *Circus Parade*."

But Jim's soul wasn't there, anyway, and his body didn't belong there either, because he had received the last rites of the Catholic Church and should have been buried in Calvary, or back in St. Mary's, Ohio, where he was born.

THAT was where he had his six years of schooling in an orphanage. Blasphemous on most issues, he was forever grateful to the nuns who had given him that much. They taught him to write sentences as short as a prison haircut. He kept them that way.

That he was unique among \$1000-a-week scenario-writers in quitting school at the age of twelve, I doubt. But he was unique in his admittance of how little he contributed to a picture. "All I did for *Trader Horn*, he said, "was to tell Thalberg that animals were afraid of fire." He had a standing offer to become one of Irving Thalberg's writers. He looked on it as a stooge role and refused to do it regularly.

One of the most mixed up men in this town, Rupert Hughes, helped Tully most when a dollar and some guidance made all of the difference. It was Hughes who made possible the completion of *Emmett Lawler*.

Tully raised the lowest form of writing, fan magazines, to its highest level and dragged the writing of novels from the lofty heights of *Lord Fauntleroy* down to the realism of *Shanty Irish*. He was the first Hollywood writer to release an unretouched portrait of a director. That was *Jarnegan* who could be Jack Ford, Jim Cruze, Rex Ingraham or Jim Tully.

For *Beggars of Life*, *Circus Parade*, *The Bruiser*, and *Shadows of Men*, he received a lot of praise. For *Ladies In The Parlor* he got suppressed by Sum-

ner. His books got him listed all over the world as the hobo author, despite the fact that he hadn't been in a boxcar in more than 25 years. When I first met him he owned a three-acre, \$100,000 estate on Toluca Lake, over the hill from Hollywood. A brick mansion, modeled on the lines of George Borrow's, and hidden among dozens of giant eucalyptus trees, it housed Hollywood's best library. In those days there weren't more than three civilized homes in that land of magnificent mansions, and Jim Tully's was one of the three.

Fifteen miles beyond this retreat which became too hemmed in for him, what with the Crosbys, Powells, Astors, Twelvetrees, Brians, Bruces, Brents, Disneys, and other picture personalities building on all sides of him, Tully bought a 100-acre ranch at Chatsworth so that he might retreat farther from the civilization that attacked him from the west, where he found his fame, and the east, where he had none to lose.

He grew alfalfa on his acres and thought that when the revolution came he could live off his land, because land, in his curiously innocent opinion, is the last thing the revolutionists, whether from left or right, will take. The revolution, to hear him tell it, was just beyond the 10th hill and several leagues this side of the horizon, already.

"Let's have another drink!"

If you didn't let him have another drink, you'd find his wrath swerving from the generality to the particular, and you'd soon be writhing under the lash of his incredible candor. It was a curious mixture of Billingsgate and Shakespeare—a poet pelting you with manure.

If you didn't let him have another drink, his voice got more basso profundo, and deeper truths came out—all of them about you and all of them destined to make others grin, and you squirm. Naturally, such a talker shocked the more cautious.

HE wrote all over the place. In one and the same month he appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *Scribner's*, *True Confessions*, the *American Mercury*, and *Photoplay*. And if that isn't getting a feel of the public pulse, Lydia Pinkham never had it either.

Nobody has ever been quite so willing to go into doghouses as Tully, feeling certain he'd bark his way out before dawn. And his bark, more's the pity, was far worse than his bite. He had a compassion for men, which hobbled him at every turn; that compassion, of course, took him out of the running in the Superman Sweepstakes, the Nietzschean dope sheet which drove it's author crazy, Mencken to beer, and Shaw to clowning.

When Mencken sent Tully to San Quentin to report the hanging of a youth, Tully stood by the scaffold and watched the lad's neck pop, then sat down without a

quaver of emotion or a break in a line and wrote his most hard-boiled report. Without even one aside, *A California Holiday* remains the most terrible indictment against capital punishment ever written in America.

Of those who do manage to get their quota of notoriety which passes for fame, he was proudest of Jack Dempsey, who incidentally was in town but wasn't at the funeral. Both were road kids; both made the grade. Dempsey made more money, but Dempsey sensed that Tully did more with what talent he brought out of the ring. Jim's wife was Myrtle Zwetow. She was as beautiful as a Brenda print. The only lady in surroundings where all try to play the part, she protected the ex-road-kid in the social clinches, and kept him from those who would put him back in the chain gang from which he was the world's most eminent fugitive. She babied him till the end.

He used to go to New York twice a year just to see Dempsey, Mencken, Nathan, Winchell, Runyon, and others of the old mob, but after a week or two he began to die every night, waiting for the dawn, and then suddenly he would hop a rattler or a plane and blow for his Hollywood hideaway.

The people he wrote about—hoboes, prize fighters, circus troupers, prostitutes, fugitives from chain gangs, and beggars of life generally—are what the trade knows as money pictures, but Tully's treatment of them was too tough, in the main, for the censors. Producers found it easier to steal his raw material and dress it up as society drama, a seduction on a drawing-room couch being easier to condone, presumably, than one in a boxcar or haymow.

At lunch once with Walter Winchell, he asked the latter for the loan of his column.

"What for?" asked Winchell.

"To keep a road kid from burning," was the answer.

"Okay," said Winchell.

Between the two they saved the kid from the electric chair. He later studied journalism.

"I'm sorry now I didn't let him burn," said Tully.

How he could hold on to the roots of his serious writing in such an atmosphere was the most enigmatic thing about Tully. Writers with as much industry, leaving out entirely the issue of talent, say, to a man, that they can't work in California. Tully on the other hand, swore by Hollywood. He couldn't work in New York.

ONE of those incredible accidents of history turned him from working to writing for a living. He was 22 at the time, and had been sent by Martin Davey, the famous tree surgeon who rose to be governor of Ohio, into the south in command of 10 men. His letters to



Davey were so interesting the tree surgeon asked him to write something for the company's bulletin.

That was his first published piece, and though he didn't make much money at writing for a long time, he had averaged \$80,000 a year between 1926 and 1936.

Wilson Mizner once questioned his talent and became crazed with Tully's own appraisal. Tully claimed he was a better writer than O. Henry.

Mizner's eyes popped. "You — oh God in Heaven, guide me! What do I hear? You digger in the garbage of literature!"

"As you will, Wilson," demurred Jim, "I'm built to go far places."

"On a freight!" Mizner's paunch heaved. "Why, you never took a bath till you were thirty."

"That may be — but anyone'll tell you I can write O. Henry's ears off," insisted Tully.

Mizner's wrath boiled over. "Why, you impudent red-headed cur! You porter in the bawdy house of words. My God!" He rose. "I'm leaving here right now." He walked toward the door but turned to add: "You low rat, you befouler of the great dead, you slime of the underworld, you shady reprehensible rogue."

He paused for breath and added in scorn: "You a better writer than O. Henry! Why, you couldn't sign his tax receipts! You're as illiterate as a publisher. If you had a Roman nose you'd be a courtesan!"

He began to act like bubble gum. He trembled. "I'm leaving your house right now, you damned brainless jazzer of decent English, before you claim you wrote O. Henry's stories."

Tully calmly replied. "No, Wilson, I wouldn't say that."

Mizner, deflated with relief, paused at the door.

"Well," he said, "that's decent of you."

"Not exactly decent," replied the stocky little David to the big fat Goliath, "I'd be ashamed to."

Mizner relapsed. He fell to the rug and crawled toward the door. "Good God in Heaven, deliver me from this lousy literary hobo," he screamed.

ON the other hand, he could bury his talent for the glorification of others. I am not thinking particularly of his writings for Chaplin or other ghostings. I am thinking of a time ten or twelve years ago when it looked as if I would bow out myself. He offered to fulfill any of my writing commitments. I remember one he completed by stealing freely from his own files and putting my name on the finished product. He assured the mother of our little fleas from heaven not to worry, that he would take care of them till they were able to fly off on their own.

Politically, he claimed to be neither of the left wing nor the right wing, but all wings. I pray that he was right in this. He deserved to be accepted by the wing commanders of heaven for one thing alone: the silent agony of his last years on earth.

"I pity everything that lives," he used to say, "because it has to die." I do not want to go into the real tragedy of his life. He has confessed that he only broke once in his life and that I was with him when it happened. I pitied him then, but I do not pity him now. All I ask is that since he now rests in peace he extend his help to those of us still this side of purgatory.



## An Old Frenchman With a New Idea

SWG member Leonard Hoffman notes that it might interest some critics of the American Authors' Authority plan to know that the precedent for AAA is over a hundred years old.

Mr. Hoffman quotes from Matthew Josephson's biography of Victor Hugo to prove his point.

Josephson emphasized that Hugo insisted on the principle of licensing rather than outright sale. He always limited to a ten year period the time covered by the contract for the right to publish his books. After ten years he renewed the publishing contract at more favorable terms. He insisted that the title to a literary property must remain under the control of that property's creator or his heirs. As a result, Josephson reminds us that Hugo was a very rich man, with a pyramiding income after 1838 from the sale of reprint rights for limited periods of time.

Mr. Hoffman adds: "If a French author were able to secure such advantageous terms in the 19th century, would it not be more correct to term the AAA a traditional rather than a revolutionary development? In the pattern of the past often lies progress."

# Conference on Thought Control

LESTER KOENIG

*LESTER KOENIG, member of the editorial committee of The Screen Writer, was assigned by the editor to report on the proceedings of the recent Beverly Hills Conference Against Thought Control, in which many SWG members played leading roles.*

**"F**OR the past five days," said Chairman Howard Koch, "we have participated in a unique event: the first conference against thought control in the history of the world." Koch was addressing almost five hundred earnest and applauding writers, actors, newspapermen, radio and film and professional people who crowded the Palm Room of the Beverly Hills Hotel Sunday evening, July 13th, for the closing session of that conference.

"There's no mistaking it," said Robert Kenney, Chairman of the Progressive Citizens of America, whose Hollywood Arts, Sciences and Professions Council sponsored the conference, "a war has been declared on culture."

"It is a war," Koch had said, "to control the people, in spite of the people, against the people."

There was no attempt made to imply that there is absolute thought control, of the kind imposed by force under the Gestapo or the Japanese "thought police." Obviously the existence of the conference, the fact that the speakers could get up and speak as freely as they did, is proof of that. However, the general theme of the conference, as it emerged to this reporter, was that there is danger of losing some of our basic freedoms, and that the "eternal vigilance" of the familiar textbook quotation means the citizen of a democracy must be concerned with the least violation of his liberty. It is easy to legislate away and lose freedom; it is not so easy to win it back.

This was the note sounded at all nine of the panels on Press, Fine Arts, Literature, Health & Medicine, Law, Radio, Science & Education, The Film, The Actor. Having been asked to report on the proceedings, or those sections of specific interest to screen writers, I attended the Literature and Film panels only. However, I realized as I listened to the summaries given at the closing session, that many of the facts given by apparently competent authorities were also of interest because they throw light on similar developments in other professions, and in science.

Summarizing the work of the arts panels, Donald Ogden Stewart pointed out that thought control was imposed by political and economic pressures on the artist. J. Parnell Thomas, he said, was the name most frequently mentioned in all the panels and he went on to give a few examples of thought control which were brought out in the discussions: the attack on modern painting as "radical art containing subversive propaganda dangerous to our way of life" at the Los Angeles Museum; the closing down by General Marshall of the State Department's art show of leading American contemporary paintings which was to be sent abroad as a cultural gesture of good will; the refusal of an entry visa to a leading Mexican artist because of his political views.

The Press panel quoted the University of Chicago's report on Freedom of the Press, a report sponsored by Henry Luce, as indicating that freedom to be in grave danger. Newspapers as big business, and as monopolies, made it impractical, it was stated, for minority or opposition views to be printed and given wide circulation.

The Radio panel claimed four networks and twenty advertising agencies now control broadcasts to 130,000,000 people and have the right to say what those people should hear and what they should not hear. The "climate" on Broadway, which makes it terribly difficult for any play of social meaning to be produced, was described by Arthur Laurents and Arnaud d'Usseau. In music, it was said that no performer could be booked on any major circuit except through one of two major agencies. New composers find it very difficult to be heard. In city planning, the development of new and improved techniques by architects and designers have been frustrated by the control which the banks and lending agencies exert on real estate and building.

**A**CCORDING to Stewart, there are wider and wider restrictions on the artist; subtle censorship, self-imposed, through fear of political attack or loss



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of livelihood, is resulting in artists retreating into "art for art's sake," or "ivory towers." The parallel to the fate of the artists under German fascism was indicated. There is a need, Stewart said, for the artist to find new ways and new media outside commercial control to reach people and fulfill their role as the conscience of the people.

The same trends were stressed by Dr. Harold Orr, President of the American Federation of Teachers, in summarizing the five papers delivered at the Science and Education panels. The militarization of science, resulting in restrictions on the exchange of data necessary to scientific advance was cited. It was charged that information necessary to students is being denied them, and that they were receiving a "watered down, army approved" version of scientific knowledge. Our destruction of the Japanese cyclotrons was scored as a crime against mankind, as much of a crime as the burning of Japanese libraries would have been, according to the Association of Oak Ridge Scientists, since the cyclotrons were not necessary to the manufacture of atomic bombs, but were vital to the development of atomic energy for peaceful industrial and medical use. Dr. Orr indicated that the treatment of the teacher in many sections of the country was that of a second class citizen and was part of the pattern of the degradation of the cultural workers. In the colleges and high schools, he charged, the situation was often shocking, with a reported instance of armed spies hired to report on what students were saying and thinking.

Ben Margolis, Los Angeles attorney, whom Hugh De Lacy, former Seattle Congressman introduced as a "fighting lawyer and friend of progress," summarized the panels on Law and Medicine. Margolis stated the investigations in his panels indicated a "direct relationship between the concentration of economic power in monopoly and the suppression of freedom of thought." Medicine was characterized as a "big industry." It was stated that an alliance between the American Medical Association, representing organized medicine, and the drug manufacturing industry was a major force in keeping quack cures and nostrums on the market, controlling hospital appointments, and denying the people such benefits as adequate medical care for all.

Margolis then moved on to the subject of the law, by the application or "mis-application" of which thought control was exercised. In discussing the failure of the law to "conform to our changing social structure," Margolis described President Truman's executive order on "loyalty" of government employees, under which one man, the Attorney General of the United States, is given the power to define any organization as "subversive." This, Margolis said, in effect invalidated

the time-honored and democratic principle that within the limits of the penal codes, every citizen may think and preach what he believes.

Margolis also summarized a paper by Morris Cohn, the legal counsel of the Screen Writers' Guild, who discussed the legal basis of committees such as the House Committee on Un-American Activities. He called its very existence "a challenge to constitutional safeguards of freedom." Like all congressional committees, he explained, its power of investigation is directed toward, and limited to, fields which can result in legislation. There is no precedent at law for trials without indictment, representation by counsel, juries, all of which are denied by some committees which subpoena witnesses and subject them to a form of trial. Throughout the conference resolutions were passed condemning this type of congressional or legislative committee, and specifically asking for the abolition of the two committees headed by Congressman J. Parnell Thomas and California State Senator Jack Tenney.

THIS, in brief, was the substance of the Thought Control Conference. The material of specific interest to writers was presented on Friday evening, July 11th, at the Literature panel, Saturday afternoon, July 12th, at the Film panel.

The audience of over five hundred and fifty which crowded the Literature panel applauded Donald Ogden Stewart's introductory remarks, in which he said he felt many writers were not writing what they knew they should write because they knew no one would produce or buy it. "We mustn't make our own censorship," Stewart said, pointing out there was a huge audience "wanting to be reached." In proof of this, he mentioned the recent success of *Kingsblood Royal*, *Gentleman's Agreement*, and *Inside U. S. A.*

Philip Stevenson discussed thought control patterns during the period of the Alien and Sedition Acts, in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Parallels to present trends were shown in describing how the Federalists, who were in office, used every means at their disposal to defeat the rising democratic party of Thomas Jefferson. The Sedition Act, for example, named the French people as our enemies, even though we were not at war with France. On the contrary France had been our only European ally in the American Revolution. By this law, criticism of any act of any government official was a criminal libel, punishable by fine and imprisonment. Stevenson's historical resume was of interest to the writers in his audience, since during the first three months after the act was passed, 21 Democratic editors were jailed. Among others, Matthew Lyon, the Congressman from Vermont was also jailed, and it even became a crime for

a New York State Senator to circulate petitions against the Act, calling for its repeal. But, Stevenson pointed out, in the campaign of 1800, the people demonstrated their indignation by electing the vilified Jefferson, and defeating the Federalists so thoroughly they never again won an election. The Federalists had succeeded in "postponing democracy for a few years," and then they achieved oblivion.

The second paper, *What the Europeans Expect From American Writers*, was presented by novelist George Tabori. He warned of the vicious cycle which thought control sets up, for it creates new demands for freedom, which in turn engenders more thought control. He described the vast European audience which wants to know about the world and about themselves. This audience looks toward the United States, where they expect to find the new novels emerging in the tradition of realism which will arise out of our conflicts. The American writer, Tabori warned, cannot be silent today, for "silence would be suicide for him, and possibly for humanity."

The third paper, *The Writer As the Conscience of the People*, was read by Albert Maltz, and its presentation brought the author an enthusiastic response from the packed hall. It was a long, documented paper, and can scarcely be treated in the limited space of this report. Maltz began by describing Zola's defense of Dreyfus, and the courageous support he received at that time from other men of letters, who risked their liberty to defend him. Proust, for example, went from door to door with petitions to aid Zola after his conviction and imprisonment. In tracing the reason why Zola, a successful novelist, should have concerned himself with the fate of a man he had never met, Maltz analyzed the relation of the writer to society and life. He discussed four major attitudes the writer has open to him: a) cynicism, b) concern with self, c) cool impartiality, and finally, d) a compassionate and partisan espousal of forward-looking social values.

MALTZ did not deny that there were examples of literary art which had come from the first three named attitudes, but he expressed his firm conviction that the best in literature had come from authors who adhered to the latter view. In support of this, he cited Victor Hugo, exiled for 17 years for participation in the Republican uprising of 1848, and who later aided the Paris Commune; Stendhal, who was banned from Lombardy for "holding the most pernicious political ideas;" Byron, who volunteered in the Greek rebel army, fought for Greek independence; Dostoevsky, who served a term in Siberia; Gorki, who was jailed; and Chekhov, who came to Gorki's defense. Maltz described how Tolstoy faced the threat of im-

prisonment for revealing the truth about a famine which the Czarist state tried to keep quiet. And finally Maltz turned to the American authors who also faced and defeated attempts to silence them because of their espousal of the abolitionist cause. There was a rope around William Lloyd Garrison's neck, and the Reverend Lovejoy was shot and killed, Maltz said, indicating that it took no little courage for Thoreau to refuse to pay his taxes as a protest against slavery or for William Cullen Bryant to write his anti-slavery editorials, or for Whittier, Lowell, Dana and Emerson to raise their voices in protest. In Philadelphia, Emerson was denied the right to speak in 1856. A Boston mob prevented him from speaking in 1861. Walt Whitman was fired from the Brooklyn Daily Eagle for "radical political sentiments."

Maltz concluded by describing the conviction of Howard Fast, Herman Shumlin, and a dozen other members of the executive board of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee in a Federal Court recently for conspiracy to commit contempt of the House Un-American Activities Committee. He told how Fast's *Citizen Tom Paine* had been banned from public school libraries of New York and Detroit. "If they can do this to Fast," Maltz stated, "the shadow of Rankin has fallen across the desk of every other honest American writer."

The panel concluded with brief statements by Arthur Laurents and Arnaud D'Usseau on the New York theatre. George Sklar described the history of the Federal Theater Project, which he described as a "people's theatre" which produced 1000 plays in four years, plays which were seen by 25,000,000 people. When the Dies Committee investigated the Project, the question was asked, "Is Christopher Marlowe a Communist?" Sklar indicated the humor in that question was not very funny, for it revealed the kind of men who seek to exercise political censorship in the arts.

Other speakers included Millen Brand, who spoke on the Hearst anti-obscenity campaign, an extension of an article which appeared in the January, 1947 issue of *The Screen Writer*. Barclay Tobey, publisher's representative, described the growing thought control in the publishing field. Milton Merlin, who described himself as a literary critic "whimsically connected with the Los Angeles Times," said the Times apparently viewed neither literature nor himself as very important, for they had exercised no influence on his reviews. "They just don't care," Merlin said. Dorothy Hughes said she had not been subjected to any restrictions in her work, but voiced the opinion that the novelist would find a much wider audience if he had something to say. Wilma Shore, magazine writer, spoke of the connection between advertising and



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the content of stories. The preference of editors for the story with the happy ending, she said, tended to remove the reader from the realities of life.

THE Film Panel, the following afternoon in the same room, was equally crowded. John Cromwell, noted motion picture director, chaired the session, which heard the following papers: *The Areas of Silence* by Irving Pichel; *The Right to Fail, or With Whom is the Alliance Allied*, by Carey McWilliams; *The Relation of the Actor to Content in Films* by Howard Da Silva; *You Can't Do That* by Adrian Scott.\* *The Screenwriter and Censorship* by Richard Collins\*, and finally, *The Time of Your Life*, by Paul Draper.

Pichel spoke of the "great mandate for reality" which the film received during the war. The value of real films for morale and training purposes was then obvious. Now, Pichel claimed, the film has been "caponized," separated from reality, as though the war was really over, instead of continuing in the form of many unresolved conflicts.

He likened the screen to "an accomplished actor memorizing and repeating words that have been applauded in other media, and have been pre-censored, sifted, filtered against deviation from the most commonly accepted and widely held social generalizations." In concluding, Pichel warned: "It is possible that film makers can, by repeated and discriminate attack, be frightened into an even greater reticence and evasion. But the greater danger is that the thoughts and feelings of the mass of American theater-goers will be fragmented in the hope of rewelding them by raising a new enemy into a new unity—a unity of apprehension, of suspicion, of fear, a unity which will be only a caricature of the characteristic hopefulness and love of freedom which have marked the growth of this country to its present power and influence. Should this calamity befall, American thought will be indeed under an iron control which will rigidly clamp itself upon every medium by which thought is communicated. The screen, utterly dependent upon popular response, will be the first to fall."

The relations between the Motion Picture Alliance and the House Committee on Un-American Activities was the subject of Carey McWilliams' paper. According to McWilliams, the MPA announced its formation in 1944 to counter the impression that Hollywood was "a hotbed of sedition and subversion." McWilliams pointed out that the assertion a charge is not true is a time-honored propaganda device to give wider cur-

rency to the charge itself. He referred to the leaders of the MPA, analyzing their motivations, and said that if they hadn't existed, it would have been necessary to invent them to aid forces outside the motion picture industry to attack it and control it for partisan propaganda. McWilliams traced the history of continuing attacks on Hollywood's "red domination" from Congressman Martin Dies, through Senators Gerald Nye and Burton K. Wheeler, the Chicago Tribune and up to the present time.

He stated the motion picture producers "were obviously unconcerned about the MPA as long as it concentrated its fire on the screenwriters, but that some producers realized that such attacks would not end with the writers. He mentioned Walter Wanger and Samuel Goldwyn as two producers who had disavowed the MPA, and said that Louis B. Mayer has "expressed less than complete enthusiasm" for actor Robert Taylor's charge the MGM film *Song of Russia* was loaded with subversive notions.

IN discussing the relation of the actor to thought control, Howard Da Silva said that actors are often subject to attack for using their enormous popularity to "interfere" in politics. Da Silva pointed out, "It's not that an actor can't be a citizen, it's what side he's on." It is only the actor or actress who espouses a "progressive" cause who is the recipient of such attack, he said, and mentioned specifically the criticism of Katharine Hepburn for her speech at a meeting addressed by Henry Wallace in Hollywood last May 19th.

Da Silva stressed what he called the "duties" of an actor. An actor, he felt, should speak up honestly on decisive issues: he should also realize he has wide influence because of the parts he plays, and how he plays them, and the actor, therefore, should refrain from being a party to the "stereotype" characterization of Negroes, or "foreign types," since the "stereotype" is a way to evade the truth.

Following Adrian Scott's description of the making of *Crossfire*, and his discussion of self-imposed censorship which results from the fear of criticism and personal attack, Richard Collins outlined other forms of censorship imposed upon the screenwriter.

The final speaker on the Film panel was Paul Draper, well-known dancer, who did not present a written paper, but told what he described as "a story of factual observation" of something which has already happened to the script of William Saroyan's play, *The Time of Your Life*, as a result of the activities of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Draper began by saying that he was able to make his livelihood

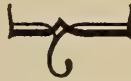
\*Neither Mr. Scott's nor Mr. Collins' speeches are fully described in this report, since Mr. Scott's paper is printed in full in this issue, and an article on this subject by Mr. Collins will appear in the September issue of *The Screen Writer*.

elsewhere, and therefore could speak more freely than other members of the panel whose economic security depended on the film industry.

He recognized that the changes in the play were scarcely "world-shaking," and did not basically affect the content of the film, but he offered them in evidence as an instance of how fear is currently imposing its own censorship. According to Draper, in one of Saroyan's scenes, there was a reference to Hitler, who was the menace to world security at the time the play was written. The line went, in part, "No, the headline isn't about me, it's about Hitler." Since that reference was dated, it was suggested to Draper that he substitute Stalin for Hitler. Draper objected, and eventually it

was suggested as a form of compromise that the name of Molotov be substituted. However, when Draper told the producer that Sidney Bernstein, who represented J. Arthur Rank, said his organization would not distribute a film which had a line in it derogatory to the Soviet Union, "there was flashing action." An alternate take was made for "protection" in which the line became, "No, the headline isn't about me, it's about Kilroy!"

Draper stated the line "I haven't the heart to be a heel so I'm a worker," was deleted, and he was assured one couldn't use the word worker today in a Hollywood film "because of the Thomas-Rankin committee investigation."



## A Few Comments on the New Format

Since changing from its "little magazine" style to its present format, The Screen Writer has received a great number of comments on the June and July issues. Here are a few of them:

*"The magazine looks swell in its new format!"* — Bennet Cerf, publisher.

*"In its handsome new format it is as bright now in appearance as it is stimulating in content . . . Thanks for hours of entertaining and informative reading."* — Virginia Wright, Drama Editor, Los Angeles Daily News.

*"I like the new format."* — Raymond Chandler, novelist and screen writer.

*"I feel the magazine is now beginning to realize its true potentialities."* — Jay Richard Kennedy, writer-producer.

*"Important in content."* — Vincent Sherman, director.

*"With that last issue we joined the big league."* — Malvin Wald, screen writer and playwright.

*"A lot of essential reading in the new Screen Writer."* — Sidney Skolsky, columnist and producer.

*"The editor, the director of publications and the entire editorial committee are all due an orchid apiece for the new Screen Writer, up to standard size for the first time. . . . The mag has always been grand reading, but now in full dress and with good makeup it's a real treat. . . . The format is particularly distinctive."* — Hollywood Review.

*"A wealth of information for writers."* — Harry Crocker in the Los Angeles Examiner.



# FILM INCOME TREBLES

**Dept. of Commerce Reveals Jump From \$432,000,000 To \$1,130,000,000 In 1946-47**

Washington.—Revised figures plainly showing the great expansion of the motion picture industry since 1929 were released over the weekend by the Department of Commerce. The department's new statistics on national income are the result of a five-year research project. Figures for the radio and television industry also show its tremendous growth.

The figures show that the income of the picture industry increased nearly 300 percent in the 18-year period— from \$432,000,000 in 1929 to \$1,130,000,000 in 1946. Low figure for the 18-year period was in 1932, when the income of the industry dropped to \$191,000,000. Since 1933, however, the industry has shown a steady gain income, with the excep-

**FILM INDUSTRY PROFITS IN '46 HIT \$316 MILLION**

**Loew \$10,904,821 Net 12 Weeks Instead Of 40**  
The statement issued last week by Loew's & Co. that the net of Loew's was \$10,904,821 for 40 weeks should have read 12 weeks, the error being made by

**1% OF THE GROSS**  
*An Economic Primer of Screen Writing*

**RECORD FILM INCOME BILLION TOPPED IN 1946; PROFITS HIT \$316 MILLION; \$706 MILLION ON PAYROLL**

Washington, July 20.—Motion pictures stayed on top in 1946 as the nation's no. 1 recreation according to statistics on national income issued tonight by the U. S. Department of Commerce. Here is the story of the amusement industry in 1946, \$1,130,000,000 of the nation's total income, compared to \$214,000,000 in 1945. From radio broadcasting and \$656,000,000 from all other amusements and recreations. Totals in all three categories were at an all-time high of \$1,130,000,000 in 1946. The previous records in each instance having been made in 1945. Last year, the public spent the sum of \$794,000,000.

**Income Of Film Industry Increases 300 Pet. Since '29**

★ These are headlines from Variety and Reporter July 21st

OUR PRESENT SHARE OF THEATRE ADMISSIONS IN THE UNITED STATES ALONE IS ONE PER CENT — MUCH LESS IF COMPUTED ON THE WORLD GROSS OF AMERICAN PICTURES. DOES IT SEEM PREPOSTEROUS TO SUGGEST THAT SCREEN WRITERS ACTUALLY PROVIDE AS MUCH AS, SAY, TWO PER CENT OF WHAT THE MOVIE GOER GETS FOR HIS MONEY?

*This is another special section of The Screen Writer, prepared to highlight the more important factors in the current decrease of screen writing employment, and to survey briefly the problems of the original story market and other questions affecting the economic and professional welfare of writers in Hollywood.*

## First Steps in Arithmetic

RING LARDNER, JR.

**A**CCORDING to Hollywood legend it was a common practice ten or fifteen years ago for armed studio scouts to snatch some defenseless writer out of the Algonquin or the Poets' Rest on

RING LARDNER, JR., is a former vice-president and presently a member of the Executive Board of SWG. He is holder of screen writing awards from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and from the Hollywood Writers Mobilization.

Sheridan Square and rush him in a sealed train to a suite in the Beverly-Wilshire, an oak-paneled office in Culver City and oblivion. Then for six months or a year he would see no one except his beautiful secretary and the boy who delivered the weekly fistful of rubies.

It may have occurred to you — especially if you're out of a job and exposed to such random thoughts —

that anecdotes of this sort are not making the rounds the way they used to. Some rather drastic changes have taken place in the profession of screenwriting over the years, and the last six months, in particular, have seen such a rapid and steep decline in job opportunities that even the most rugged minds among the individualists are beginning to sense that the gravy is thinning out.

One reason this realization has come so slowly to the more prosperous writers—who have always contributed a disproportionate share of the Guild leadership—is that the thinning process has occurred for the most part beneath the thick upper layer from which they feed. Salaries in the top levels are actually higher than they have ever been; there is a larger body of writers earning 1500 dollars a week and up than ever before; and the highly paid minority has more job security than any other section of the membership.

These facts serve to intensify the competition for jobs among the less fortunate majority and to explain why there is more acute consciousness of unemployment than a first glance at the actual statistics would justify. For, while the situation is bad enough if you think of approximately 1500 writers competing for some 421 jobs (as of July 1), consider how it looks if you estimate that at least 200 of our members are almost constantly employed. Then we have the far grimmer picture of about 1300 writers competing for a little over 200 jobs. Thus no bare statement of the decline in employment by figures or percentages will present the real rise in the odds against the average writer's attempt to get on a studio payroll. This must be borne in mind as we proceed to such a bare statement.

The figures above are partly guesswork. Those I am now going to cite are from Guild records. The real drop in major studio employment figures became apparent last March, when the total number of writers employed (eight studios exclusive of independents) was 331 as opposed to 434 in March, 1946, a decline of 23½%. In April, always a month of comparatively high employment, the drop had risen to 32½% before 1946 and 28% below the average for April during the last six years. By June the figure had dropped to 263, 35% below 1946 and 32½% below the six year average for June. As of July 1, it was 262, 32% below 1946 and also 32% below the July average.

In addition to the major warning above, certain other facts should be cited in order to provide a fuller understanding of these statistics. The figures for past years include writers on layoff or leave of absence and so, therefore, for comparative purposes, do the current ones. Subtracting these and a few on loan-out to independents, the number of writers actually being paid a salary by the eight major studios on July 1 was 243. Also it is pertinent that the number working for inde-

pendents is greater this year than ever before. The only comparative figures we have are 168 in March, 1947 as compared to 145 in March, 1946. In July, 1947, the number was about 175. But this increase of 25 or so in the independent field has very little effect on the

MAXIMUM EMPLOYMENT AT MAJOR STUDIOS  
BY MONTH FOR LAST THREE YEARS

	1947	1946	1945
August .....		364	366
September .....		364	353
October .....		346	351
November .....		361	347
December .....		328	378
January .....	335	407	325
February .....	339	426	369
March .....	348	443	387
April .....	310	440	381
May .....	293	427	370
June .....	259	411	369
July .....	262	394	361

NUMBER OF WRITERS EMPLOYED AT  
INDEPENDENT STUDIOS

June, 1938 .....	60
March, 1946 .....	145
March, 1947 .....	168
July, 1947 .....	178
<i>Total Number Writers Employed at Majors and Independents</i>	
June, 1938 .....	419
March, 1946 .....	588
March, 1947 .....	516
July, 1947 .....	440

job situation in the critical middle section of our membership. As of last April, more than a third of the writers in the independent field were making over \$1250 a week (11 of them producers-owners), and 21% working for less than \$250 or at flat deal minimums.

**A**N overall drop in employment of about 30% would be a pretty serious problem in any employee organization at any time. But the writer job situation of 1947 is a sudden crisis imposed upon a critical situation which has been intensifying for ten years. Our reactions to it have been cushioned by the fact that 277 Guild members were in the armed services during the period of greatest new writer influx, but the fact is that the number of writers competing for jobs has approximately doubled since the rebirth of the Guild in 1937. We have become painfully aware of this statistic during the past year because of the combined circumstances of our veterans' returning and the sharp curtailment of studio production.

There is another factor, too, less easy to measure



and less important statistically, but definitely a contributing cause of our present dilemma. That is the growing efficiency of screenwriters in their craft and of the processes of production in general. I've mentioned the fact that the writer who is kept on salary without assignment is a phenomenon of the past, and, without any figures to back it up, I am sure that a much smaller percentage of stories are shelved than was true in the Thalberg era. Certainly, too, the number of writers working on a single picture has decreased. All of these are trends we should applaud — as long as our indorsement of them doesn't mean that we bear the sole cost of the consequent reduction in studio overhead. But it verges on the suicidal for writers to create better pictures in less time for what would be the sole benefit of the stockholders if this were a business in which the stockholders received what they naively regarded as their due.

Though there is likely to be considerable argument about the proper remedies, there can hardly be any concerning the situation with which we are faced — a situation of severe and growing unemployment. There is no direct means open to us of solving this problem: we can neither persuade the studios to make more pictures nor make it a Guild responsibility to see that a single individual member gets a job. Most of the devices to which trade unions generally resort to combat unemployment are impractical for our purposes because of the special nature of our craft. No system of seniority rights, automatic upgrading or spreading of work by shorter hours can be made to apply to screenwriting. Spreading the work by putting more men on the individual job is also out of the question; even when it was proposed as an emergency measure to help returning veterans get a first assignment, it was rejected by the membership and the veterans themselves as being in conflict with the development of screenwriting as a creative art. Spreading the work by limiting the number of weeks in a year a man may work is a method that makes a little more sense on the surface, but even if it could ever be practical in a field with such sharp differences in talent, it would require a complete closed shop, which is not only unrealizable but temporarily illegal.

**Y**ET the essence of the problem lies in the fact there are too many candidates for the available jobs. William Pomerance, our former and still unreplaced executive secretary, performed one of his many valuable services to the Guild when he urged us in the second issue of this magazine two years ago, to face the economic facts of the industry. He pointed out that the difference between the writers' pool and the other pools of workers in the business "is the fact that

there is no recognition of any obligation toward this pool of writers upon which the industry depends. . . . So long as the producer does not have to recognize that he depends upon this pool of writers, he is careless and constantly enlarges it, since he has no responsibility toward it."

Nine months later, at a meeting on April 29, 1946, the membership overwhelmingly approved a report delivered by Arthur Strawn, chairman of the veterans' committee, which stated that "the importance of a guaranteed annual wage cannot be over-emphasized at this time because the producers have flooded the writers' market in Hollywood without assuming any responsibility whatsoever for the new writers they imported during our absence."

Then in August of last year the discussion retrogressed several decades in a piece by Mary C. McCall, Jr., called *The Unlick'd Bear Whelp*. Miss McCall poised at the far end of a rainbow the laudable objectives of screenplays written originally for the screen, leasing the rights, profit-sharing and control of material. Then, skipping over the methods by which these reforms were to be achieved and the interim arrangements which would have to be instituted during the transition period, she urged us to "turn our backs on economic security" and discovered a mystical contradiction between the goals she was advocating and the principle of minimum security guaranteed in advance, which she maintained could only be justified during the economic paralysis of depression. On this question, at least, Miss McCall's position seems more conservative than that of such men as Guggenheim, Carnegie and Rockefeller, who discarded the notion that artists and scientists do their best work while suffering, proposing instead that they be subsidized in order to transfer their concentration from the rent to their creative efforts.

The subject was restored to realistic level when Lester Cole pointed out in the October issue that we were faced with an existing system of making pictures which was not apt to be overturned in the immediate future by our efforts or anyone else's. He reminded Miss McCall that more than half our members were engaged in the highly specialized field of low-budget formula pictures and rarely found the time to consider the impression of the mother bear on its young. What was implied in his somewhat too gentle refutation was that if we held out for Utopia or nothing, we would be forced by the pressure of existing circumstances into wholesale salary-cutting and an economic bondage more severe than the one deplored by Miss McCall.

Shortly after the present executive board was elected, an economic program committee was set up under the chairmanship of Mr. Cole to consider both the imme-

diate and long-range measures which lay within the scope and power of the Guild. That committee will make a full report of its findings and its proposals to a membership meeting scheduled to take place shortly after this article is published. But the field is wide open for amendments and additional ideas from any member concerned by the present crisis. From my own random sampling, that covers practically every writer who is not firmly ensconced in a producer's lap.

As of this writing the committee's report has yet to be formulated in detail and submitted to the executive board, but just to furnish food for thought, attack or what have you, I would like to outline here the main proposals which have been discussed so far.

The initial offensive, of course, is against the ever-expanding pool. Because no one has seriously suggested that we try to shut off the infusion of new writing talent, the emphasis has been on how to reduce the studios' irresponsibility toward it. As Lester Cole has pointed out, it isn't a question of initiating something new called an annual minimum wage. We already have one. The present figure is \$375 a year: our minimum weekly wage doubled by a two-week minimum guarantee. But even this doesn't apply to writers hired for the first time by a studio. Until he qualifies for the minimum, a writer, if he wants to, can accept \$100 for two weeks work and become a permanent part of the available pool. And it is hardly inconceivable that a studio might be willing to invest many thousands of dollars in trying out many hundreds of bright young men and women on the chance that two or three of them might be worth far more than the total investment. We can never be secure against this sort of reckless assault on our living standards until the apprentice category is abolished and the minimum figures are set high enough to impose a judicious caution on the producers' experiments with new talent. A minimum guarantee of 15 weeks at a salary of \$400 a week—or a minimum annual wage of \$6000 for every writer engaged by a studio—has been suggested.

SUCH a reform would not only reduce the number of new writers brought in every year. Inevitably it would also force a considerable percentage of the present membership out of the pool. In the twelve-month period between November 1, 1945 and October 31, 1946, an exceptionally prosperous year, 37% of our active members earned less than \$5000 from studio employment. This doesn't mean, of course, that nearly that many would be excluded under the new system. If a third or a half of that 37% were eliminated, the remainder would presumably be able to qualify for the minimum. In any case, whatever element of ruthlessness exists in the program must be weighed against

the alternative of continuing the present trend toward chaos.

Ideally these new minimums should be put into effect at the earliest possible moment, but we have to face the fact that they are technically barred until the expiration of our Minimum Basic Agreement in May, 1949. If both the Guild and the producers insist on sticking to the letter of that contract, the benefits of the change will be dangerously delayed. One way to avoid that delay would be to convince the producers that the greater harmony and efficiency under the new system would work to their advantage.

But even if we have to wait until 1949 to revise our minimums, there are other more immediate steps which can be taken both within the Guild itself and, because they lie outside the area of our present agreement, in conjunction with the producers. One of the gravest dangers of a period of declining employment is that of salary cuts. The individual writer, in need of a job and bargaining in solitary weakness, needs the support of his Guild in refusing to accept a cut. At the least a pledge by every member not to reduce his salary without consultation with a small committee of the executive board would bolster his bargaining position and serve to bring present practices out into the open. And a blanket prohibition against flat sum deals designed to give the writer less than his normal salary would check one of the most prevalent methods of cutting salaries.

At lower income levels the process is reversed and a concealed violation of the Minimum Basic Agreement is effected when the producer persuades the writer to work on a salary basis in order to undercut the flat deal minimums. A writer may be hired, for example, at the minimum salary of \$187.50 or close to it, on the understanding that he must complete the job in three or four weeks.

The necessity of additional compensation for reissued pictures has been widely discussed not only in our Guild but among other guilds and unions in Hollywood. The writers alone have the added problem of pictures which are remade from the same stories and essentially the same screenplays as the original version. The time to face the inequities of these practices is overdue. During the first decade of talking pictures there was such a steady development in our mastery of the medium that the average release of 1932 seemed ridiculously old-fashioned in 1940. This is not true of 1940 pictures reissued today. Some of the leading legitimate theatres in the world have devoted themselves mainly to a repertory of timeless classics. It is not fantastic to anticipate the day when there is such an accumulation of successful films that the theatres of the world will require only a small number of new pic-



tures each year to refresh their programs. And it is only the people who make the pictures that will suffer. The companies are protected in two ways: first, because they are theatre owners as well, and, second, because they never sell their property as we do. They keep on leasing it.

In demanding payment for the reissues and remakes of today and a licensing system for the future, we are merely seeking an equitable share of the enormous extra profits which our employers derive from these practices. Even more basic and immediate is the question of increasing our total share of the normal industry take. We know that the net profits after taxes of seven studios increased 230.2% between 1940 and 1945, and that there was another jump of about 100% last year. But in the year of the industry's greatest profits the total amount paid to employed writers was \$18,000,000, or an even 1% of the 1946 box-office gross.

MARY McCALL, Joseph L. Mankiewicz and others have suggested one method of boosting our share. The more original screenplays that are produced in proportion to adaptations, the greater percentage of initial story cost will be paid to members of this Guild, and the greater the claim of the individual writer to royalties. I think it should be a definite part of the function of the Guild to stimulate in every possible way the writing of stories and screenplays conceived originally for the screen. We should also discuss with the producers how they might provide the same sort of stimulation to original writing for the screen as is afforded, for instance, by the MGM novel contest.

But it is only of indirect aid to the unemployed writer

to increase the individual earnings of writers who do work. Probably the most provocative and constructive of all the proposals advanced by the economic program committee is the demand for an overall percentage of the box-office gross. It is important when we consider this idea not to be led away from the basic point by the details of how such a sum might be distributed. It is perfectly possible that the Guild might prescribe a different method each year depending on the economic circumstances then obtaining. The essential point is that the question of such distribution would be irrelevant to our negotiations with the producers; it would be solely the concern of the Guild according to the democratic determination of its members.

Such a levy could go into effect in the immediate future, provided only that we and whatever allied groups we enlisted in the program — and I would like to call particular attention to our close community of interest with the Screen Directors Guild — were united in our conviction that it was necessary and just, and in our determination to fight for it. The screenwriters of France already collect a percentage directly from the box-office. Our employers are well acquainted with this practice for it is they, because of the legal fiction by which we endow them with "authorship," who pocket the authors' royalties on American pictures distributed in France.

Our present share of theatre admissions in the United States alone is one per cent — much less if computed on the world gross of American pictures. Does it seem preposterous to suggest that we actually provide as much as, say, two per cent of what the moviegoer gets for his money?

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*Production costs have gone up 63% over a year ago. . . . Costs that have been hiked embrace every facet of film-making: Demands of writers, salaries of cast and crew and construction materials.*

— From a recent 20th-Fox Statement.

# A Fundamental Right?

LESTER COLE

**W**HENEVER, in the period of the Guild's existence, virtual unanimity of thought has resulted in concerted action, notable gains, economically and professionally, have been achieved.

True, this has been infrequent—but three or four times in fifteen years—yet it would be rather idealistic to have hoped for much more, considering the varied backgrounds, intellectual interests, social and political, of fourteen hundred members now comprising our membership.

Yet it is interesting to note that despite the diversified individual interests; despite all disparities, political, esthetic and economic, the great majority of writers forget such differences and make common defense with energy and courage when a fundamental right is under attack. That is a fact which cannot be disputed; a glance at our history as a Guild will quickly prove it.

In 1933, the Producer's Association instituted a fifty percent cut in writers' salaries. Out of that primitive method of arbitrarily reducing a writer's financial return for his productiveness, the Screen Writers' Guild was born.

Then for eight years the Producer's Association refused to recognize the S.W.G. as the legitimate bargaining agent for writers.

The result was a strike vote, which was practically unanimous. And the result of this overwhelming expression of opinion, and willingness to back it up with concerted action, was the initiation of negotiations—within two weeks after the vote was taken.

During the five years that have passed since the signing of the Minimum Basic Agreement, writers have become aware of many "discrepancies" in their economic relationship with their employers. Some of these were known at the time the Minimum Basic Agreement was entered into, and others have become known since, due to many factors which only became clearer with the passage of time.

James M. Cain and the committee with which he worked contributed a notable analysis of what amounts to grand larceny, practiced boldly in broad daylight. Once enlightened, unanimity again was achieved within the Guild—always excepting, of course, those perennial

dissidents who years ago actively sought the Guild's destruction.

The enlightenment brought about by the understanding of what happens in the field of copyright — of property rights — has caused another area, too long under wraps, to arouse active curiosity. It is that field in which the majority of the screenwriters have an even greater stake than they have in book publishing and play production; the fundamental rights of the salaried screen writer.

The question, "Does the salaried writer, however much money he received, get his *just* reward for his work?" is one which has been painfully discussed since the earliest days. This sore wound has been permitted to fester so long, undiagnosed, because there has been no genuine, organized Guild attention paid it, except in the field of minimum salaries, an area which, at best, directly affects a minority of our membership. Because no real diagnosis has been made of the wound, no one has been willing to venture prescribing the cure. Because there is no real understanding of the nature of the ailment, no one has yet wished even to peek under the bandages, to see whether what remains covered is merely an annoying writers' itch or an economic cancer.

Self-interest and curiosity have caused me to lift up the gauze, and take a look. I'm no specialist in the field, and I'm looking for consultation at once, with all interested parties, for to my unpracticed eye what I saw there looked for all the world like a slowly rotting fundamental right, eating its way through the body of the Guild.

**A**DMITTEDLY the economic relationship of the screenwriter to the industry in which he works is highly complex, and varies in many respects from that of writers in other fields to their sources of revenue. Equally obvious is the fact that the relationship of screen writers to each other is quite unlike that of members of most trade unions, where the members do not compete for jobs with each other as we do, (directly and indirectly) and where salaries do not have such an enormous range. Our difficulty, therefore, is in reaching agreement on what *is* a fundamental right, common to us all. Until that understanding is reached, we go our different ways on all issues. Many of the

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LESTER COLE is chairman of the SWG Economic Program Committee and a member of the SWG Executive Board.



## THE SCREEN WRITER

writers who have "arrived," professionally and economically, believe they have nothing more to gain by looking under the bandages," and many of those who are insecure — the vast majority — also look the other way, doubting whether they will be supported in any action decided upon — should their discoveries demand action — by their more successful and more indifferent colleagues. The result is complacency in one section of our membership and fear of that complacency in the balance.

Today screenwriters face the gravest economic crisis since the advent of sound films.

Elsewhere in this issue other aspects of the economic situation are examined: the effect of reissues upon employment, and the ever-increasing writers pool at the disposal of the producers; a pool which constantly limits our annual period of employment to their advantage without their assuming any responsibility for the severe economic dislocation it causes innumerable qualified, proven writers. These conditions are well known to us; they will be further studied, and I hope, acted upon by the entire membership. But at their present worst, they affect all of the writers only some of the time, and only some of the writers all of the time.

There has been in existence for some time another situation; one which, in my opinion, affects all of the writers all of the time. It relates to unemployment in the most critical way; it is a question not of conditions of unemployment, but rather, conditions of *employment*.

Since writers first came to Hollywood on a salary arrangement, they have accepted, either through indifference, or ignorance, the written words of their contracts as unchangeable law. The essence of the section of the contract to which I refer is that which places the salaried writer's relationship to the producer on a *completely* different basis than that of a novelist to his publisher or a playwright to his producer. We have, over the years, become so accustomed to this state of affairs that we actually believe it is so, that the relationship is completely different.

So deeply has this become ingrained, that even those most successful writers, who have been able to command percentages, settle for percentages of profits, rather than royalties on gross receipts. Obviously a percentage of profits is better than no percentage, but it is at best a bad bargain, so long as the writer does not have a voice in production, and the difference in his return on a shrewdly produced picture and on one wastefully, extravagantly produced, can be considerable. The same picture might gross three million dollars, whether it's made for one million, or two million eight. The difference to the writer who waits for his percentage of profit would be great. In the publish-

ing field, writers are only concerned with royalties, not with profits. They don't care whether the book costs the publisher sixty cents or ninety; their return is the same. Similarly in the theatre.

Is it true, as we have so long been told, that our relationship to the producer is different from that of writers in the other fields mentioned above? Or is it what we have been led to believe? Are those writers correct who say, "You can't ask for royalties unless you are willing to forego salaries." Or are they merely thoughtlessly repeating what is both unprofitable and/or politic for them to repeat?

IT is my opinion, which I hope is correct, that the relationship of the screenwriter to the motion picture company is almost identical to that of the playwright to the producer. I say "almost" because of one extremely minor difference. When a play producer pays the minimum of six hundred dollars (maximum many thousands) for an option on production, he relinquishes all rights in a stipulated time if he fails to produce the play. In motion picture production the writer is paid a legal minimum of twenty-two hundred and fifty dollars (illegal minimum, less than six hundred) and a maximum of as many thousands as the writer can bargain for, just as in the theatre. Here is the difference: at the option of the producer the screenplay may not be produced, and the rights remain with the producer. This is unavoidable, as things are at present, since the screenwriters' rights in his work are generally inextricable from other rights owned by the producer. The disparity between the screenwriter's salary and the traditional six hundred dollar advance to the playwright may be held roughly to compensate for his relinquishment of opportunities to market his work elsewhere. The similarity, however, is greater and more fundamental than the difference.

Both producers have the right, utterly beyond your control, *not* to produce. In the case of motion picture management, at present you sell, for your salary, not only the right *not* to produce but the right *to* produce. This is the error. I believe for the salary received writers should sell the script and the right *not* to produce. But that the agreement should not cover the right *to* produce. That's a completely different matter, and should require a completely different consideration as with the playwrights' royalties.

It should be obvious to all working screenwriters who have been here longer than a year that scripts are rarely written for production; they are written for producers, or for a producing company, in which rests the sole decision as to whether or not the screenplay will be produced.

Your salary for writing a screenplay is based solely

upon delivery of the finished work, and is in *no way contingent upon production* or any conditions relating to production. (This point could be amplified indefinitely, but a single illustration should make it clear, if it is not already so. Excellent screenplays have been shelved for a variety of reasons ranging from unavailability of actors to management myopia; similarly inferior screenplays have been produced for as many reasons, ranging from availability of actors to management myopia.)

But the point is that any and all conditions which cause the screenplay either to be produced or to be shelved are completely outside the authority of the author.

No matter how tenderly we cherish the hope that we are writing for the screen, it is in fact an illusion; we are merely writing for a producer who may, or may not, depending upon a variety of circumstances, whims, policies, etc., actually produce it. Studio statistics will prove we are not writing for the screen, but at least for half a screen. Records will show that every major studio prepares at least twice as many screenplays as it will produce in any given year. Then, with a surplus of *properties*, it will decide, without your knowledge, much less consent, which it will produce.

This is not unique to our medium. Theatre managers take options annually on two, three or more plays, and usually end up producing only one. As in motion pictures, availability of cast, director, cost of production, etc., guide his choice. Similarly, in the theatre and in films; the discarded play in the former field begins to make the rounds, and the discarded writer in films does likewise.

In each case, their property is again put up for hire. One in the form of a written play, the other in the form of the ability to write the play.

The *dissimilarity*, the one which needs quick correction, is with the other screenplay, the one that is to be produced. For here, in reality, the screenwriter

enters a *new* relationship with the producing company, even as the playwright whose play is to be produced enters a new relationship with the play producer. For now, the screen play has a new and added value; a new and added value for which, unlike his colleague in the theatre, he receives no compensation. There can be no argument, I feel sure, over whether or not his screenplay is worth more produced than unproduced. And there can be no argument over the established fact that he is in no way compensated for this additional value that has been created. No, the arguments take another tack.

Opponents of the proposition will ask, "What about the loss incurred by the studio in screenplays not produced?" The answer to that question is two-fold; first, they bought the services of the writer, and if they choose not to use his material, it is a matter of sole concern to themselves. And second, who says the studio incurred a loss? Every piece of literary property owned by a studio is put upon their books as an *asset*, not a liability. If you think an unproduced screenplay has no value, ask the executive head of any studio to give you one. Go farther, try to *buy back* a screenplay you have written for the amount of salary you have received. You'll soon discover whether unproduced screenplays have any value.

To me, it is apparent that a screenplay in most instances, is worth at least as much as it cost in its *unproduced* state; therefore, it is worth countless times as much when produced. How much more is it worth? How much of that added worth is the writer entitled to since it was he who created both the original and the added value?

In conclusion, I want to say this brief exploration makes no pretensions at being definitive. But I believe a fundamental right is being violated, and recalling how, in the past, the members of the Guild rallied under such circumstances, I hopefully bring it to your attention.

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*"The Guild should demand a minimum guarantee for people who have worked many years and acquired standing in the industry. Writers are not getting their share of motion picture money. No qualified new writer should be paid less than \$400 or \$500 a week."*

— Statement of unemployed SWG member polled for opinion on unemployment situation.



# No Applause for These Encores

MARTIN FIELD

**T**HE motion picture tenaciously clings to its uniqueness. Today, in direct contradiction to other industries in which employment is in ratio to prosperity, the film industry is at its most prosperous and at the same time the unemployment of its workers is most severe.

Apparently ordinary statistical analyses do not apply when it comes to Hollywood. An orthodox economist, unacquainted with the peculiarities of our industry, can only be baffled by its contradictions. It's a case of needing to know the special conditions that characterize the motion picture business and then, and only then, can the true picture of Hollywood be seen. This is not to imply that sound economic logic does not motivate the operations of the industry. During depression, when competition for the reduced box office dollar was keenest, more pictures were produced. Conversely, during the prosperous war period, when long theatre runs became common and movie attendance jumped, less pictures were produced and were more profitable than the former great number.

When the major film companies scrapped B pictures and began making twenty pictures a year apiece instead of fifty or sixty, there wasn't much that the guilds and unions could do about the reduced employment that resulted.

However, in the past the producers could not afford to ignore B production because small companies and independent producers would be sure to rush into the vacuum with their own product. The explanation for the current lack of fear of competitive B product lies in reissues, whose zero cost of production makes them unbeatable.

When sound first came to the screen in 1926 it was a pretty scratchy, crude affair. Only the novelty of its addition to sight kept production of the early sound films highly profitable. In a few years the sound engineers brought the quality of the sound up to the level of photography. For some seventeen years since, a backlog of some 6,000 feature films has been piled up. Of these thousands of pictures, at least a few thousand can be revived and shown to the new audiences

that have grown up or been developed since these films were first made.

In short, the pictures made by Hollywood's workers have become a Frankenstein's monster so far as their employment, or lack of it, is concerned. Such a situation could only hold true in the film industry, where a living, dramatic performance can be preserved on film and stored away in cans for many years. Ordinary articles of manufacture, like automobiles, tin cans, radios, or refrigerators deteriorate with use and once they are sold they can bring no further profit to the manufacturers. If a book is reissued, the author receives additional royalties and the printers and papermakers receive wages. If a stage play is revived, the playwright gets royalties, the actors are reemployed, the stage hands, in fact, every one connected with the show is reimbursed on the same basis as if it were a new play. The same applies to a repeat of a radio show. Reissues of books and plays and radio shows are welcomed as fostering employment of the people involved.

The reissue of motion pictures fosters employment in the distribution and exhibition branches of our industry, but in the production end the very creators of these reissues, writers, directors, actors, technicians and other personnel, are deprived of employment.

A man who runs a film exchange stated he will keep busy for three years handling 300 Universal reissues. It is no concern of his that these reissues will take the place of 300 possible current features. The costs of these reissues were written off the corporation books long ago. Whatever additional revenue these reissues provide is clear profit to the film companies.

It remains to be seen whether or not the Federal Trade Commission may become concerned with the exhibition of re-issues under the guise of new films.

**T**HE welfare of all employees of the industry is affected by reissues. Actors, for example, are harmed in many ways. Aside from the question of reducing the employment of actors generally, six Deanna Durbin reissues in one year, for instance, could hurt the box office of a new Durbin picture.

Musicians, who have made notable progress in protecting themselves regarding radio and recordings,

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MARTIN FIELD is a member of the SWG Editorial Committee and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

are vitally affected by reissues. Although Mr. Petrillo has not as yet asked that musicians be paid again on reissues, the American Federation of Musicians, it is safe to say, will take up that matter in due time.

The reissue problem has become more and more urgent in the last few years as more film companies have jumped on the clear profit bandwagon. Last year, of approximately 400 films released, more than 100, or 25 per cent, were reissues. As a result, between 200 and 300 writers, several hundred directors and producers, and thousands of actors, musicians and skilled studio workers were not employed. A state of affairs in which about 25 per cent of Hollywood's film workers are displaced from employment is too critical and unhealthy a condition to be accepted or ignored.

In terms of money and people, here's the way it stacks up: According to the latest available Department of Commerce figures, the salaries of 43,322 production people employed in Hollywood in 1945 amounted to a total of \$139,077,053. One-fourth of that approximates 10,000 production people who were not paid \$35,000,000.

A few months ago, in May, it was reported that reissues had flooded New York screens. Of 224 pictures playing in the metropolitan area, 105 were reissues and 29 were foreign films. Of the foreign films, several were reissues also, so we have a situation

wherein 50 per cent of the product in the richest exhibiting area in the world was composed of reissues.

It is heartening to realize that this threat of reissues to the welfare of the industry's workers has created almost complete unanimity of opinion among the guilds and unions. It is a situation so grave that all factions of Hollywood labor, no matter how they may disagree on other issues, have come together in an unprecedented move to share in the profits of these reissued films.

Interestingly enough, the producers themselves cued this concerted effort. The Screen Writers' Guild and the Screen Actors' Guild were both told by the producers that if their membership were compensated for reissues, then all the people who made these films would be entitled to payment. Agreeing with the producers on this logical point, many guilds and unions are planning to act together and are drawing up a mutual program of action.\*

In an industry which has its own exceptional characteristics, the organized groups of film makers are forced to plan accordingly. The satisfactory solution to the reissue problem will not come quickly or easily, but it can be solved and it will be solved for the benefit of all of us.

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\*For report on inter-guild and union conference called by SWG to discuss reissues, see page 42.

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*"I believe the Guild should insist that agents give us better representation. For several months my agent has had chapters of a novel and letter from a major publisher showing great interest in the material, and I learned the other day he had not told story editors about publisher's interest."*

— Another SWG member's statement.



# What's Happening to Our Jobs?

PAUL GANGELIN

**T**HESE are rough times for the screen writer. The word goes around that Metro's staff is down to sixty from a normal of a hundred and eight. Republic is down to twelve, or fourteen, or something. Paramount's down to . . . They're all down. To borrow a current wisecrack, unemployed writers are roaming the Boulevard like buffalo.

Periods of low unemployment in a chancy business like ours are to be expected and have occurred from time to time. It seems to me, however, that this one is different in kind from any of its predecessors. The elements that go into its making are enormously complex, reflecting the disturbed world situation as well as internal uncertainty and need for revising values. A radical change in the approach to making pictures is signalized.

It is my opinion that as time goes on the professional or journeyman screen writer will find fewer opportunities for salaried employment. I am not speaking of those people who have fitted themselves successfully into the high places of the industry. It is the large middle group I am concerned with, the men and women who are able, who know their trade, but have achieved no outstanding credits and are dependent on routine studio assignments for economic survival. There will, I think be fewer routine studio assignments, and the screen writer will find himself in a narrowing field, already overcrowded, with his one asset, his skill in the film medium, losing much of its importance.

The latter part of the preceding statement, I am aware, comes under the head of fighting words. It is the belief of good men that the writer who masters the form of the screen becomes increasingly important to the industry with experience. I question that as being only superficially true.

These expressions, and the reflections which follow, make it necessary, I think, or at least desirable, for me to produce a certificate of qualification.

I have written for the screen for twenty-five years, and only for the screen, slugging it out, originals, adaptations, screen plays, here in Hollywood, in New York,

and in London. I may safely be called a screen writer. On occasion I have even been a "film author."

My observation over the years has led me to certain conclusions, which I grant are controversial, but they're the only ones I've got. Let me set them down in order.

*First*, that the trained, Hollywood-bred film writer is not the source of the best original material for the screen.

*Second*, that long service in the industry is as likely to keep a writer out of work as to get him jobs, and this sometimes applies even to the people who have had substantial success.

*Third*, that mastering the technique of writing for the screen is not as important as it is made out to be, and is far from an assurance of a long and prosperous professional life.

I'll give reasons for all this while you're getting the tar and feathers warmed up.

**D**URING its nonage, which is drawing to a slow and reluctant close, the motion picture industry made its pictures indiscriminately. It bayed along the scent of a publicity-conditioned popular taste, eager as a pack of beagles with a sure hare at the end of the run. Writers, or artificers, were required who could put stories into the terms of the medium. It was not terribly exacting work and there was plenty of it. Volume counted, and, what with block booking and monopolistic control, the returns were in the bag before anyone wrote "Fade In."

Today the appetite of the audience is growing sharper, there are consent decrees and other brakes on the gravy train. It requires vast sums of money to make a picture, and even then the returns are not assured. In this market it is necessary for the producer to look not to the man who can fill a reliable formula, but to the one who presents a fresh titillation that will keep people coming into theatres. Fresh ideas, fresh patterns, come from writers who are not writing for the screen.

Let us take *Lost Week End*, the most unusual American film of recent years, as a handy example. Much talent went into the making of the picture, much daring imagination was required to see in it a film possibility, but all that was merely contributory, even if admirably

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PAUL GANGELIN, for many years a screenwriter in Hollywood and London, has served as a member both of the SWG Executive Board and of the Council of the British Screenwriter's Association.

contributory. What distinguished *Lost Week End* and what won it its Oscars, was, basically, the fact that a man, a novelist, unsubsidized, on his own time, had written an arresting chronicle of alcoholism, not with motion pictures in mind but probably, as Sheridan Gibney put it in his article last month, because of "some inner necessity to objectify the turmoil and conflict of subjective life."

Now try to conceive the creation of the premise of *Lost Week End* if it had been left to us in Hollywood. Try to imagine the screen writer, indoctrinated in the prejudices, foibles, and shibboleths of the motion picture business, hoping to achieve a job and a contract by writing something saleable, turning out a study of a drunk. And then go a bit further and imagine his attributing the drunk's plight to unresolved homosexual conflicts. I can hear the screams of the story editors ringing from Burbank to Culver City, and so can you.

It is deplorable but true and probably inevitable that we writers who have long been stall-fed in Hollywood do not think in terms of expressing our inner necessities or reflecting our experience of life. Our terms are simpler — and defeat their own ends. We try to play safe. We say, "I hear they need a story for Rosalind Russell," or, "Paramount's in the market for a comedy for Goddard," and so we pour into the studios annually hundreds of "originals," following trends, trying to anticipate markets, trying to tailor stars, and the Academy Awards for the best original story and the best original screen play are given shamefacedly, *faute de mieux*.

That, I should say, is telling 'em — or us.

**P**POINT Number Two, and you may have to turn back to find out what it was, is directly related to what has preceded. The writer who has been long in Hollywood, who has conscientiously learned his trade and is good at it, must realize that he can fall from grace very quickly. A bad picture or two, whether it is his fault or not, a conflict with a producer, or just simple tough luck, can throw him into what is known with grim understatement as a "dry spell." Dry spells, or a condition of earning no money, can last an awfully long time. I've known them to last right into the bankruptcy court.

Into this consideration enters the fact that producers tend to become bored with writers whom they have seen around too long. As they yearn for new faces on film, they yearn for new presences in story conferences, the reassurance of the "fresh mind", of new ideas.

The fresh mind, however, is not safe. On his induction into the picture business because of, say, a novel or a play, he is greeted with enthusiasm, respect, and

hope by the producer. He, on his side, for the first time in his life, usually, is paid a salary for practicing his craft of writing. He says, and I've known it to happen a dozen times, "How long has this been going on?" He falls to with a will, the money rolls in, and he makes a payment on a house and dreams of a swimming pool. He neglects the field which first brought him distinction. He becomes chained to the job, he has to meet installments, he becomes dependent on the good will of those few sources of employment which the studios represent.

Time passes. He circulates among the studios, trying to out-guess or please producers. His original accomplishment is forgotten, and he becomes just another name on an agent's list.

It may be well to state here that I know that this is not the inevitable development, that there are notable and many exceptions. My point, though, is that the exceptions should not be taken to be the general rule. There are many more writers who came to Hollywood with high expectations wondering what hit them than there are members of the Screen Writers' Guild living in Bel-Air.

**M**Y third contention was that learning the knack or art of screen dramatizing is not of final importance. That is easy to substantiate. Too many people have done it. Over the years I have seen hundreds of neophytes who didn't know a dissolve from a parallel come into the business. Assuming they could write at all and were normally bright, one could take it for granted that in reasonable time they would master the technical requirements of our medium. I would be hard put to it to think of any writer, brought in from another field, who did not achieve reasonable and adequate competence in writing for pictures. There are, of course, differences between those who are merely competent and those who are excellent, but the man who cannot learn to turn out a useful and satisfactory script by present standards cannot have been very good in whatever he undertook in the first place.

All this may sound very discouraging. It is not meant to be. I consider it constructive to make a realistic appraisal of the unhappy side of writing for pictures. I have talked to many bewildered and disheartened writers. An approach to a general understanding of the problems that face us may help them orient themselves.

To those outside the industry who may read this and are being tempted by Hollywood salaries, let me point out that there is in the best of times an excess of three hundred in the available labor pool of writers. You, too, may wind up unhonored and undistinguished on the agent's list if you burn your bridges behind you.



# What of the Market for Originals?

*The following article was prepared by members of the Editorial Committee from material furnished by Stanley Roberts, chairman of the SWG Economic Program Sub-Committee on employment problems.*

IN an editorial of July 5, 1947, the Los Angeles *Daily News* spoke sadly of "an enfeeblement of the creative spirit in the American motion picture industry." It told how hothouse characters were "given words to speak most folks never utter." Although the latter criticism was pointless in the same ratio as an art critic complaining that a painting is not a photographic reproduction of a person or place, the whole anxiety of the editorial specifies a problem. It is giving those who take films seriously some worry—especially writers.

Writers are in an unhappy position—people who get no credit when what they produce is praised and are passed the blame when anything they are remotely connected with is damned. They are used to it. It has become something of a Hollywood habit not only to take the dirty end of the stick but also rub it around in the hair with a kind of gloomy masochism. Writers are hacks; cobblers; serfs; tools; human dictaphones; people without integrity or talent. This may be true: the screenwriters are the first to admit it. And the poverty of their inspiration and execution is nowhere more evident than in the almost non-existence of major motion picture originals.

The lure of writing Hollywood originals should be both artistic and financial. But it must be considered that before engaging in such an occupation a writer must ask himself some questions.

The first is: can motion picture writers, so long derided as creators, write originals?

The answer to this seems to be an unqualified aye. Hollywood represents the greatest pool of variously qualified writers in the world—nearly two thousand of them. They have appeared in the business of writing films because they have succeeded, more or less, in allied sorts of writing and have been convinced they can make more in doing films. Yet something has harassed them into the repression of those creative abilities for which they originally staked themselves.

James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau, two of the most distinguished playwrights in the country, spent years in Hollywood apprenticeship. They did nothing but B pictures for Twentieth Century-Fox until they escaped to New York. Emmet Lavery, himself a dramatist, had abandoned Hollywood for teaching at Smith College when a picture called *Hitler's Children* which he had adapted from a book, suddenly came in under the box-office wire. Well-known novelists such as Robert Wilder, poets such as Robert Nathan, have languished in Hollywood without producing any noticeable literature for the screen.

THE "something" which has built this impasse consists of the facts of the situation. There is no writer for motion pictures who has not felt the urge to write an original. What has deterred him is his better and more sensible self. An author concocting an original knows it will pass through readers, story editors, executives, producers, story consultants, relatives, and even studio story-tellers. Each of these people have a virtual veto over his creation, a being which is as dear to the writer—for at least a few months—as the child of his flesh. It is, literally, his brain-child and has the affection thereof. He knows the general intellectual level of the studio hierarchies. He knows it is both useless and dangerous to present anything original—as witness the comment of a story-editor at a major studio who refused to believe an original composed from unpublished sources. He said it was "not authentic" because he had never heard of the facts before. Thus the author is put in the position of a rather stupid hoaxer.

But suppose an original gets to the selling stage. Then, the writer knows, the story will never in the world be considered on its merit. The head of a major studio, presented with an original recently which was priced at \$75,000, turned over the 75 pages and said incredulously: "Why, that's a thousand dollars a page!", a critical position from which he did not recede. Had the original been triple-spaced, it might have sold. An original will be considered on the basis of the stars available, timeliness, pre-sold audience appeal, the influence of its sponsors (as in the case of one major producer who took up the cudgels for an original

which had been turned down by all responsible people at the studio — except the owner — at an asking price of \$30,000. The producer sold it to the owner for \$50,000). The story itself will be almost negligible in determining the final sale.

But suppose it is sold. Then agents, the director, the star, the distributor representatives, the international releases, the Johnston Office, and a host of other grem-lins — not the least of them the producer and his associates — take up the script. Other writers superimpose their ideas. What finally emerges, in the very nature of things, if it retains any resemblance at all to the original, is a miracle beyond that of Sebastian who was pierced with a thousand arrows and still survived. Perhaps this happens, once in a thousand times — the final insult is applied by the publicity and advertising which is, as often as not, misleading or downright mendacious — as exemplified in the suit against the distributors of *Colonel Blimp* in this country who plugged it as the sex-secrets of a British general.

All this is equivalent to making your three-year-old infant run an Apache gantlet. Is it any wonder that creative writers — accustomed by contrast to the royal treatment accorded by publishers, magazines, and other media of writing — should shrink from the ordeal?

Still, the motion picture industry yowls like a rutting tomcat for new, original, creative material. And they buy items like *Annie Get Your Gun*, (without Ethel Merman, mind) for \$650,000; an outright flop like Sidney Kingsley's *The Patriot* for \$100,000; and such resounding nosedives as *Christopher Blake* for \$240,000. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer offers up to \$600,000 a year in two prize novel contests. The effort is all toward adapting the impetus given by publicity and advertising and success (if any) to the mills of the motion picture. Not a single effort has been made to subsidize or aid the creation of original material for the screen.

It is true that, despite the terrible weight of incubi, some originals have come through. But their very rarity is a warning, not a challenge. It is notable that few of those who have sold originals to the films repeat their chore. It simply isn't worth it, no matter how much they get. Isobel Lennart sold *Lost Angel* to MGM. Val Davies sold *Miracle on 34th Street* to 20th; Ring Lardner, Jr., and Michael Kanin sold *Woman of the Year* to MGM. But, be it noted, these were not sold on the value of the story alone. Without the persisting backing of George Seaton *Miracle* might have needed one to have been sold. Without the sponsorship and willingness of Katharine Hepburn to play in *Woman* it is to be doubted that it would have ever appeared on the screen.

FRANK SCULLY, noting that "practically no originals are being bought" in a weekly *Variety* dispatch of June 27, pointed out that out of 30 top grossers during the past 40 years, ten were from originals. (It should be remembered, however, that in the early days of motion pictures there was mostly nothing else but originals in cuff shorthand.) Scully also points out that "prior judgment" such as acceptance by a book firm and "the magic of print" can overnight reverse a studio judgment. He quotes only one instance from hundreds: *The Chair For Martin Rome*, an original which went the Hollywood rounds for two years, was turned down flat — until recent publication. Now the price for scripting it alone is \$100,000.

Under such circumstances, why in the name of either creative integrity or financial reimbursement, should writers do originals? There is no incentive whatsoever unless it be a sentimental attachment to the old school tie of Paramount or 20th (black with a thin bar of blue, diagonal). If what Ellingwood Kay, story department head of Warner's, says in weekly *Variety* is true — that only one out of every 500 original stories is suitable for purchase — then the fault lies across the thresholds of the studios themselves.

A report coincident with the Kay downbeat was that out of 463 screenplays currently being prepared for release, about 235 — better than 50 per cent — are originals. This unchecked and un-brokendown statement presents a curious contrast to Kay. It means that 117,500 originals have been submitted within, say, the last three years to the studios. An extraordinary number, to say the least, but perhaps Kay has said the least. Perhaps what it all means is that no one knows the exact state of the original market.

At any rate, the facts substantiate the conclusion that it simply does not pay a working writer, one who has to make his living from a hot typewriter either at motion pictures or other kinds of writing, to do originals. There is always the chance of the big pay-off, of course. But the man who depends upon the slot machines at Las Vegas to provide bread and butter is a fool.

Admittedly, under the restrictions now imposed arbitrarily upon original writing for the screen despite the ballyhoo for more of it and the propaganda as to how often such writing reaches the screen, the time and effort spent upon creative ideas for motion pictures is usually wasted. It would be much better spent in doing work for other media such as novels or plays. In a ten year run such a procedure might or might not bring less money but it will bring indubitably more satisfaction.

The final question is: what can be done about it? The answer is that given to the workers in any field



## THE SCREEN WRITER

of the arts where the conditions, artificial or otherwise, are such that independent enterprise cannot succeed. The writers and studios—the Guild and the MPAA—to mention the respective authorities, might join in a subsidized program of original production. This PPMPO—Project for the Production of Motion Picture Originals—might result in a renaissance of the whole screen technique, much as the Federal Theatre once did for the New York theatre. Costs could be allocated; returns might be split in a predetermined

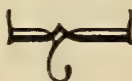
ratio to the studios, guild, and writer.

But, of course, if nearly 50 percent of the stuff now coming off the screen is original anyway, then there is no need for such a program. The writers have money; the studios have their pictures; the public has the best motion pictures possible. In that case, the writers need only spend their money; the studios to cease their clamor for originals, contests, and outside purchases; and the public to settle down in the general admission seats for the motion picture millennium.

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*"The Guild should emphasize in every way possible the importance of original stories, and the fact that the best films are made from originals. Also, please print articles in The Screen Writer discussing advisability for members of writing novels, short stories, etc., in interim periods."*

— Statement of SWG member.



### INFORMATION RELATIVE TO SCREEN WRITERS EMPLOYED ON JULY 12, 1947

Studio	Total Number writers	Actives	Assoc.	Non- Member	Less than \$250	To \$750	To \$1000	To \$1250	Over \$1250
Columbia	23	22	0	1	9	10	2	1	0
MGM	68	60	2	6	7	24	5	11	15
Paramount	31	27	1	3	2	10	9	5	2
Republic	12	11	1	0	3	8	0	1	0
RKO	35	31	2	2	2	14	4	4	9
Fox	45	42	1	2	7	7	8	4	17
Universal	21	14	0	2	2	4	5	4	4
Warners	23	23	0	0	3	11	2	2	5
<b>TOTAL (MAJORS)</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>INDEPENDENTS</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>?</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>*59</b>

\*Including 11 producer owners.

# Where Credit Is Due

PHILIP STEVENSON

*Because of the importance of credits to screen writers and to all contributors of creative talent to motion pictures, this article by Philip Stevenson on the credits system is included in this economic survey.*

FOR years a conscientious committee of the Screen Writers' Guild has been whittling away at the problems of credits for writers, constantly refining its rules in accord with the dictates of day-to-day experience. Yet credits continue to be a source of hilarity to critics and writers outside the industry, of friction and dissatisfaction among screen writers.

Both groups seem to agree that the system of apportioning credits makes it difficult if not impossible to determine with any accuracy (except in the case of solo credits) the contribution made by any writer to to film. This the outsiders find funny, the insiders tragic.

This is a serious situation because it is *not* the result of negligence. The committee has tried hard to present the contributions of screen writers in a dignified light and with justice to all concerned. Its failure should therefore be examined seriously, abandoning hilarity to those who are not so closely concerned.

At a Guild membership meeting last year, the theory underlying the Credits Committee's work was clearly indicated. Dignity, it was said, was best served by simplicity — by restricting credits as much as possible — while justice demanded a multiplicity of credits inasmuch as credits largely determine the economic position of any writer in the industry.

The committee's task has been to compromise between these two contradictory demands. It has therefore restricted screenplay credits to three, in the name of dignity, and created such minor credits as "Additional scenes by," "Contribution to screenplay by," and the evasive Academy credit which does not even appear on the screen, to satisfy the demands of justice. Forced to try to eat its cake and have it too, it has done neither.

This is borne out by the melancholy fact that some

fifty times a year its highly refined rules prove inadequate, and it resorts to arbitration panels to hear conflicting claims and make decisions from which there is no appeal.

Examination of a typical arbitration case may be useful for checking theory against practice — as simple and average a problem as we can devise.

Let's say a best-selling novel is bought by a studio although it presents certain features objectionable to the censors of the Breen Office, so that turning it into a screenplay is a challenging problem. Many writers are interviewed and probed for their "angle" on how to adapt the story. To simplify, we'll say that Writer A comes up with a practical evasion and writes the adaptation — though in practice the adaptation may be the work of several writers. So far there is no difficulty about credits. There will be a line, "From the best-selling novel by," and another line, "Adaptation by."

A LEGITIMATE question might be asked here by outsiders: Since Writer A succeeded in adapting a difficult story, why is he not kept on to develop it into a screenplay? But the answer would take us too far afield. The point is, we know that in many cases, if not in most, that part of the job is handed to Writer B.

There's many a slip 'twixt treatment and shooting script, and we will suppose that one occurs here. For any one of a dozen all-too-familiar reasons having nothing to do with B's competence or talent, he is taken off the assignment; Writer C is hired; and a second version of the script is written. To simplify again, we'll assume that in general the result is satisfactory. There are "just a few little things to fix." Again for reasons that are no reflection on C's ability, the producer hires Writer D to do the tightening and polishing.

Commonly, the polish writer is one whose record of success is unquestioned. But precisely because his creative gifts are unusual he finds it difficult to fit his style to that of his predecessors. The more conscientious a craftsman he is, the more he is forced to rewrite this and that scene, this and that line of dialogue, to give the work homogeneity and consistence. I say "forced" advisedly, for being conscientious, D is aware that he has not been employed to transform the work of B and C, but only to refine it, and that every time he alters their

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PHILIP STEVENSON is a member of SWG. Now under contract in Hollywood as a screen writer, he is also a playwright and author, in collaboration with Janet Stevenson of the recent Broadway success, *Counterattack*.



product he is diminishing their contribution and increasing his own. So the result is a compromise between artistic and economic responsibility.

Leaving aside the questionable aesthetic results of such a compromise, what does it do to the credit situation?

Writer B wrote the first draft — a trial draft, as any writer knows — in the course of which several flaws developed which could not be seen clearly till the whole was finished. But B had no chance to correct these flaws. C saw them at once, straightened them out, and added the stamp of his creative personality to the whole. By this time the outlines of B's structure were blurred; many of his scenes had been cut or transformed; the style of his dialogue had changed. In D's version the script underwent further alteration, though less in structure than in dramatization and individualization.

The arbiters have no doubts about D's credit. His contribution is seen to have made all the difference between, say, an average good picture and an outstanding one. By comparison of the three drafts he is determined to have contributed 50% or more of the shooting script.

Nor is C's portion too troublesome. His general structure and some of his dialogue have survived in the shooting script, and he is estimated to have contributed at least 35% — more than enough for a screenplay credit — leaving B 15% or less — well short of the 25% required by the rules for a credit.

B raises a squawk heard from the Crossroads of the World to Cornpatch Corners. He points out with heat that he attacked a tough script at its toughest stage; the producer had certain pet scenes he insisted on including though anyone could tell they stank; all the essentials of the final script were already in B's first draft; all C did was to make corrections B would have made himself if he'd had a chance — and to rewrite B's dialogue into slightly different words; in short, C and D are taking the bread out of the mouths of his babies by stealing his economically indispensable credit; etc., etc.

B's situation is a common dilemma of arbitration committees. Is it serving justice to deprive him of any credit? Is it serving dignity to trot out the meaningless "Contribution to screenplay?" Is a first draft no part of the process of creation, even though no line survives in the final version? But if B gets screenplay credit, is this fair to D who contributed three times as much? And wouldn't the citing of three authors suggest a hodge-podge picture? reduce the dignity of authorship? and cause the critics to throw up their hands?

Of such iffy questions are the headaches of arbitration committees. In practice they may be much more complicated than this. There have been cases involving half a dozen or more writers with approximately equal claims, and it is not unusual for a dozen or fifteen to

work on a single story. Whatever the committee decides, it is bound to offend dignity by a multiplicity of credits, or justice by austere restriction, or both by a compromise.

**M**Y proposal, which may shock some Guild members, is that we marry justice and turn the jade dignity out.

After all, what dignity is there in the profession of screenwriting? As much as inheres in the opportunity to carry through a creative job. In our not exceptional example, none of the writers had that opportunity — not even D, who could employ only part of his creative powers in covering an already created body with more seductive rondures.

It is time to remind ourselves that writing is the creation of wholeness and symmetry. Its reduction to piecework in Hollywood is the fundamental indignity.

I propose, therefore, that we cease striving for an appearance of dignity that is all too seldom real and that we give credit to every writer who has contributed even one line or one week's work to any screenplay. Then films in which the writer enjoyed the dignity of whole creation will be revealed in the credit-frame, and those in which writing was treated as piecework will be exposed for the potpourri they are. The critics will know what they are talking about in their reviews. The public will begin to distinguish one writer from another as it does in the literary and theatrical worlds. Writers and producers will tend to shy away from piecework type of production as being a debit rather than a credit in the public eye.

Paradoxically, exposure of indignity can only result in greater dignity. Credit arbitrations, because of the high economic stake, are often bitter things. Occasionally they assume the intensity of feuds between fellow Guild members that weaken the organization internally and forfeit the respect of outsiders. The percentage system of determining a writer's contribution is fundamentally absurd — as everyone except screen writers seems quick to perceive. The attempt to conceal these indignities is self-defeating — the result to date being that whenever a critic confesses himself bewildered by our credits system he encounters the resentment of screen writers who chide him with failing to understand their problems. To this writer it seems that it is we, in the first instance, who have failed to understand or anyhow to acknowledge what our real problem is: not multiplicity of credits but multiplicity of employment.

It may be objected that the proposal to give credit where credit is due is an impossible one, since Schedule A of our Minimum Basic Agreement restricts credits. But Schedule A, according to the 1946 report of the

Credits Committee, is subject to renegotiation at or before the expiration of the current Agreement.

THE indignities endured by screen writers are many, and it will take not only the AAA but some similar long-term plan for the employed writer to cope with them. My proposal is not intended as a cure-all. Simply, it will help expose the real problem instead of helping

conceal it. At least, it will abolish the comic practice of reducing creative work to quantitative terms and will end the intramural strife engendered in credit arbitrations. At best, it may discourage piecework and encourage integrated films. Finally, it will carry out the Guild's primary obligation of protecting the economic interests of all its members by insisting that no contributor be denied the credit that is economically valuable to him.

*This Special Section on the economic background of screen writing has been presented here as information vital to writers and of interest to the motion picture industry and the public.*

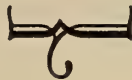
*The material in this section was prepared by individual writers under the direction of the Editorial and Economic Program Committees.*

*Members of the SWG Economic Program Committee include:*

<i>Lester Cole, Chairman</i>	<i>Ring Lardner, Jr.</i>
<i>Melville Baker</i>	<i>Maurice Rapf</i>
<i>Hugo Butler</i>	<i>Stanley Roberts</i>
<i>John Collier</i>	<i>Sol Shor</i>
<i>Walter Doniger</i>	<i>Earle Snell</i>
<i>Frank Gabrielson</i>	<i>Arthur Strawn</i>
<i>Morton Grant</i>	<i>Leo Townsend</i>

*This material has been presented with the clear recognition that far from being the last word on the subject, it is in fact only an incomplete and opening word. But it is the hope of the Editorial and the Economic Program Committees that it will be at least a provocative word, stimulating a more active interest in screen writing problems of employment and marketing.*

*All SWG members are urged to attend the important membership meeting to be held early in August, when these problems will be discussed. The Editorial Committee also urges members who have something additional to say on the subjects of employment, marketing and other economic factors to write to the editors in order that we may have further exploration of this field.*



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(July 23, 1947)

Columbia — Louella MacFarlane, acting chairman.

MGM — Anne Chapin; alternates, Sidney Boehm, Marvin Borowsky, Margaret Fitts, Charles Kaufman.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox — Richard Murphy.

Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks.

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International — Silvia Richards.

RKO — John Twist.



# Drama in the Barn Belt

ALFRED PALCA

ALFRED PALCA, a member of SWG, and now living in New York, says: "I was graduated from college in 1940, worked in radio two and a half years, in pictures half a year, and in the armed services four years. You can imagine what I think of Hitler!"

IF you think you can get an opportunity to see your play done in a summer theater before rewriting it for Broadway, think again. There are about 135 straw-hat auditoriums stretching from Cape Cod to La Jolla, but if in the thirteen-week season this year they manage to try out a grand total of 30 new productions, it will break all records for height, weight and existing weather conditions. The safest wager in town is that they will not.

It is common knowledge that Broadway has sunk into a morass of higher costs, fewer theaters and more wary producers. All agree that new plays and new playwrights are needed desperately, but no one has figured out how to discover them. New playwrights can only be developed by producing their plays and encouraging them to write more plays. Yet anything that is not sure-fire box office or an easy movie sale is a risky proposition in these days of high producing costs and stop-clauses on legitimate theaters.

Which way, then, is one to turn? A national theater, of course, is out of the question. True, the Federal Theater of depression days sustained many members of the SWG through a rough period. It also aided card-holders in the Screen Actors' Guild, the American Federation of Musicians, Actors' Equity and other professional guilds, as well as bringing legitimate theater to people who had never seen it before. But in these days such monies must be used for other national expenditures: veterans' housing, for example.\*

With Broadway and a national theater running against stone walls, I thought of the barn belt as the only possible remaining proving ground for new plays. I thought of Skowhegan, Maine, which had tried out *Life With Father*; Westport, Connecticut, where *Pursuit of Happiness* first saw the light of day; Theater '47 in Dallas, Texas, which opened this year with a new Tennessee Williams play. And I thought of the Cape Playhouse in Dennis, Massachusetts, which had given Bette Davis and Henry Fonda their first chances at acting.

Yet when the New York Times printed the open-

ing bills on the summer circuit last June, this trust seemed misplaced. Out of well over one hundred theaters listed, 26 were scheduled to debut with Elmer Rice's *Dream Girl*, 19 with Norman Krasna's *Dear Ruth*, and the rest with Maxwell Anderson's *Joan of Lorraine*. Or so it seemed.

This, of course, could have been simply a desire on the parts of the fresh air entrepreneurs to open with sure-fire attractions. But when a similar schedule was posted for the second week, I began to wonder. I asked a few questions.

Roughly speaking, summer theaters may be divided into two categories: the largest number run by people whose other theatrical connections are tenuous, and the rest run by well-known Broadway producers. The former stick pretty carefully to *Springtime For Henry* and tried and true comedies and dramas. The latter—Dennis, Westport, Bucks County, *et al*—have been known to go out on a production limb every now and then.

WESTPORT, which is run by Lawrence Langner, Armina Marshall Langner and John C. Wilson, is fairly typical of the latter group. Dennis and Skowhegan have longer histories and Bucks County has presented more opulent productions, but Westport is somewhere in the upper crust of the summer circuit. The Langners are directors of the Theater Guild and Mr. Wilson, too, is a top Broadway producer in his own right.

I phoned Mrs. Langner at the Guild office one Thursday afternoon and we agreed to meet at Westport the following Saturday. The New York, New Haven and Hartford accepted my terms and I arrived in Connecticut on schedule.

Mrs. Langner had not yet arrived when I did, but the theater's press representative, Ralph Lycett, offered to give me some background material about Westport.

"The theater," he said, "opened July 1, 1931, with Dion Boucicault's *Streets of New York*, starring Dorothy Gish and Roland Peters. It was a new play and we followed it later in the season with another new

\*Please don't quibble; Congress is bound to spend some money on GI housing.

one, *The Bride the Sun Shines On*, by Will Cotton. In '32 we did *If This Be Treason*, which had been written by John Haynes Holmes and Reginald Lawrence and starred Armina Marshall and George Coulouris. . . ."

I had told Mr. Lycett that I was interested primarily in the new plays which had received their pre-Broadway tryouts at Westport. In addition to the above-named he mentioned *Pursuit of Happiness* and *Suzanna And the Elders*, both by the Langners; *Dream Child* by J. C. Nugent, *Kill That Story* by Harry Madden and Philip Dunning, *Love On An Island* by Helen Deutsch, and others. Out of 117 productions in thirteen seasons, the Westport Country Playhouse had presented about 20 new plays. (From 1942-45 the theater had not been in operation.)

When Mrs. Langner arrived I asked her what Westport was doing that other summer theaters were not doing. She smiled as though I could not have asked a more apt question.

"Oh," she said, "we try to stay away from the revolving stock that appears at all the other summer theaters. We feel there's no point in duplicating here what you can get in town. This week we've been playing David Belasco's *Girl of the Golden West* and the audiences have loved it."

This was exactly what I was looking for, a theater that was willing to go off the beaten track. I asked Mrs. Langner eagerly what was to be the following week's production.

"Well," and again she favored me with the smile, "our usual practice is to present only one sophisticated comedy per season and so next week's bill is *French Without Tears*."

I nodded in understanding agreement.

"But then," Mrs. Langner continued, "we discovered that Tallulah Bankhead is taking *Private Lives* to Chicago for a run. Since Tallulah is a dear friend of ours, we prevailed upon her to do a week here prior to Chicago."

That was understandable. Two sophisticated comedies do not necessarily ruin a season. But what follows Tallulah?

"Why, we're doing a fine old play called *The Male Animal*."

Hmmm. And the week after that?

"*The Man Who Came To Dinner*."

MRS. LANGNER maintained that good new scripts would always be welcomed and produced on Broadway and on the summer circuit. But she said that one difficulty lies in the fact that you only have a week or so to rehearse in a summer theater. This may be all right for an old and familiar play, but it is

something else again with a script you've never seen before.

"Still, we did *Devil Take A Whittler* by Weldon Stone last year," Mrs. Langner recalled. "It was an experimental drama and interesting to do, but I'm afraid it was not for Broadway."

Ralph Lycett broke in to make a point. "We have to remember our audiences," he said. "Fifty percent of them here at Westport are artists, the other fifty percent want Tallulah's autograph."

"And, too," Mrs. Langner added, "costs are high here just as they are in the city."

We then moved on to the topic of apprentices, of whom there are 22 at Westport. Apprentices are young boys and girls who work at summer theaters for the entire season during which time they appear as extras, play small roles, work as ushers, help build, erect and strike sets, iron costumes, sew, shift scenery, sweep out dressing rooms, take tickets at the door, etc. In short, apprentices learn and work at every aspect of the theater.

Later in the day I had a chance to chat with one of them, Tom King, who, as head of the Princeton University Triangle Club, will write the book for next year's varsity show. "Gosh," said Tom, "they let us do everything here at Westport. And the best part of it all is that they don't charge us a cent! I mean, good grief, some summer theaters charge apprentices four and five hundred dollars for the season!"

Of the 22 apprentices at Westport this season, two of them (Tom is one) have ambitions as writers. There is no doubt that they are getting the finest possible schooling in the fundamentals of the theater. They have the opportunity of working with the finest artisans in the craft and of learning their secrets.

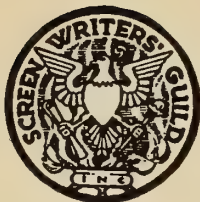
I saw the last performance that evening of *Girl of the Golden West* and went backstage afterwards to say hello to an actor-friend who appeared in it. The celebrities who went back with me for similar reasons would have lent dignity to any big opening on Broadway and from the "Dears!" and "Darlings!" and "I have nevers" that rent the air you would have thought that Mme. Sarah Bernhardt had opened in a new drama by Wm. Shakespeare. Actually the kindest thing one can say about the play is that it will do nothing to hurt Mr. Belasco's reputation as a producer.

My actor-friend invited me to drive back to the city with him and as we piled into the car he sighed deeply out of weariness.

"Well," he said as he shifted into first, "next week *East Lynne*."

"No," I demurred naively, "*French Without Tears*." But maybe he was right.





## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

**OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT, EMMET LAVERY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, MARY McCALL, JR.; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, HOWARD ESTABROOK; 3RD VICE-PRESIDENT, HUGO BUTLER; SECRETARY, F. HUGH HERBERT; TREASURER, HAROLD BUCHMAN. EXECUTIVE BOARD: MELVILLE BAKER, HAROLD BUCHMAN, HUGO BUTLER, JAMES M. CAIN, LESTER COLE, PHILIP DUNNE, HOWARD ESTABROOK, F. HUGH HERBERT, TALBOT JENNINGS, RING LARDNER, JR., MARY McCALL, JR., MAURICE RAPF, GEORGE SEATON, LEO TOWNSEND. ALTERNATES: GORDON KAHN, ISOBEL LENNART, VALENTINE DAVIES, DAVID HERTZ, RICHARD COLLINS, ART ARTHUR. COUNSEL, MORRIS E. COHN. ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALICE PENNEMAN.**

## E D I T O R I A L

**T**HE Taft-Hartley Bill has become the law of the land. It replaces the Wagner Act, with the aid of which our Guild obtained recognition and a contract from the producers, as the law which governs the relationship between the producers and ourselves. Unless there is a major political reversal in 1948, it is likely that its provisions will remain in effect during the period of our negotiations for a new contract.

It is difficult to predict exactly how the new law will affect the trade union movement in general and the Screen Writers' Guild in particular. There are many imponderables, a few of which may be listed here:

(1) The attitude of employers: in our case the motion picture producers. If they desire, they can use some of the many gimmicks in the new law effectively to destroy the collective bargaining rights once guaranteed us by the Wagner Act.

(2) The temper of the new NLRB, and particularly of the General Counsel set up by the Act. This official will be America's first labor czar, with powers far transcending those of any individual or board in the history of American labor legislation. Under the Act, the General Counsel can in effect destroy the rights of any trade union by ruling or simply by failure to act. His appointment must be approved by the Senate, which means, in cold fact, those Senators who led the fight for this particular law.

(3) The questionable constitutionality of large sections of the Act. It is possible if not probable that several of the new law's provisions will be found to violate basic constitutional liberties.

**T**HE Guild's counsel is currently preparing an analysis of the law for distribution to the membership. It is proving to be a long and tedious task. Physically, the new law is of epic proportions, and almost every one of its many pages contains fine-printed clauses which will give lawyers food for argument for years to come. In fact, a distinguished local attorney has referred to it as "The Full Employment for Lawyers Bill."

It is from this fine print, little publicized in press reports, that we may expect the Guild's major headaches to materialize. Our Guild has always been something of a model union, conservative in its attitude and impeccably democratic in its government. We have not indulged in any of the practices which the most-publicized sections of the law profess to curb. We are not bossed in any way. We have never asked for the closed shop, nor have we made political contributions. We have never called a strike, and our constitution hedges such a course of action with safeguards. But we must not fall into the trap of assuming that our conservatism in these particulars means that we have nothing to fear from the new law. It is full of hidden traps for any union which sets out to protect its members with any degree of militancy.

The Executive Board is unanimously of the opinion that President Truman was correct when he called this a shocking bill. As a Guild, we are in grave danger, how grave we do not yet know. At the very least, we have lost the legal shield behind which we were able to organize and force the producers to bargain. Conditions have largely reverted to those prevailing before 1937, when the Wagner Act was declared constitutional by the United States Supreme Court. It was then, and only then, that employers in general, including the motion picture producers, decided to comply with the provisions of the law. What our own course is to be as far as compliance is concerned must be decided by the membership, which must choose between a policy of strict obedience and one of the deliberate violation of certain sections, looking to constitutional tests in the courts. In either event, it is obvious that our efforts must be bent towards obtaining the Act's repeal.

**Y**OUR Executive Board does not counsel pessimism. Only a comparatively few years ago, collective bargaining was in effect outlawed in the United States. Captive courts, injunctions, strike-breaking agencies and company unions were only a few of the devices used by employers to cripple the union movement. Yet the movement grew and prospered. History has proved that it cannot be legislated or enjoined out of business.

Legally and historically, we are a part of that movement. Our guild has prospered when organized labor has prospered, suffered when it suffered. We can learn from its example in the past.

In losing the protection of federal law, in the defeat of complacency and smugness, perhaps we shall be the gainers after all. In being forced to depend upon ourselves, we may discover our real strength. Now, above all, is the time to close ranks and move forward.



# Report and Comment

## Summary of Authors' League Licensing Committee Report

*The Licensing Committee of the Authors' League of America recently issued "a confidential report not for publication" on the American Authors' Authority plan.*

*Since this report was made to the Authors' League Council, it has been given much space in the trade and commercial press. A summary of the ALA Licensing Committee report on AAA follows*

THE report recognizes as meritorious many of the objectives announced in the special AAA Supplement of *The Screen Writer*. It points out that these objectives are the established ones of the League and its member Guilds. From the standpoint of duplication of effort it criticizes the setting up of a new organization to achieve objectives recognized as important to writers.

It outlines briefly the Licensing Committee's interpretation of the main proposals of the AAA plan.

The report lists elements besides duplication of effort in the AAA plan which give concern to the Licensing Committee. These are: (a) "the vague proposal that the Authority is to 'preserve, enforce and protect rights arising out of or under copyright, title or other interests in literary property,'" (b) "the proposal that the Authority in respect to deals, will 'keep the bidding open' and follow unstated rules;" (c) "the undefined right of the Authority as indicated in Mr. Cain's article in the *Supplement* to the 'handling of writers' problems as a whole;" (d) "the right to take legal steps apparently with or without authors' consent in connection with rights arising under materials assigned, and in this connection to settle, give releases, etc.;" (e) "the right to censor material and

refuse to approve its sale if the board decides that it violates any law;" (f) "the right to collect and disburse money which presumably includes the proceeds of literary material;" (g) "the extent to which some of the activities may conflict with statutes against the practice of law;" (h) "the legal status of the plan under anti-trust acts;" (i) "the power of the Authority's National Director who, under the By-laws, must approve the nomination of all important members of the corporation before they can be voted upon;" (j) "the situation under which important rights of authors, dramatists, or radio writers respectively, could be decided by a majority of directors, which majority could all belong to other Guilds;" (k) "the ineffectiveness of assignments withdrawable in 30 days;" (l) "the potential risk in vesting copyright ownership in another;"

The report then goes on to discuss the problems of each of the member Guilds in regard to major rights from which such members derive their principal income.

It points out that the Dramatists' Guild has ample protection under the Basic Agreement binding until March 1, 1951, and that there is no apparent reason for a change in this field.

In the case of the Radio Writers' Guild, the Licensing Committee report recognizes that the radio writers have suffered from many abuses in their relationship with users of their material. It points out that these problems may be best overcome through contract negotiations.

In the case of the Authors' Guild, the report emphasizes the variety and complexity of relations between authors and publishers, and finds nothing in the AAA proposal which could be of help to authors or which offers any remedy as effective as action within the Guild.

As for the Screen Writers' Guild, the report points out the distinction

between SWG members, who sell material directly to motion picture studios, and other writers, from whom the studios acquire screen rights subsidiary to the basic form of the material. Any special problems affecting screen writers can, in the opinion of the League Licensing Committee, best be met through direct contract negotiation by the SWG, or by an over-all contract negotiated by the League and the SWG. The report characterizes as indefensible the practice of the motion picture industry in acquiring rights of unlimited duration in the field of film production, and a wide group of allied and subsidiary rights outside that field. It urges that the League seek to achieve a better deal for screen writers. If unsuccessful in such negotiations, it recommends that the League "use the power of its unified strength to such ends."

The Licensing Committee reports that it will continue to study the problems of licensing and the separation of rights.

*Following are the comments of the Joint Over-All AAA Committee and the Executive Board of the Screen Writers' Guild on the report of Authors' League Licensing Committee:*

THE Joint Overall Committee has considered the report of the Licensing Committee of the Authors League with great interest. We are grateful to the Licensing Committee for thus progressing the discussion of the proposed AAA a further step. Whether such discussion will lead towards eventual acceptance or rejection on the part of writers as a whole of the AAA proposal, still it is such discussion which tends to clarify not only the strengths and weaknesses of the AAA as an instrument of the Authors League, but to clarify the problems of the writing profession.

May we reply first to two comments of the Licensing Committee:



(1) that the AAA brings about a duplication of groups striving to the same ends; and (2) that the AAA contemplates an oversimplified single approach to writers' objectives in assignment to a new organization with certain powers of control.

First, duplication. Whatever has been the interpretation of the Licensing Committee concerning the By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation, it has still been the intent of the Joint Committee to set up an organization which is subordinate to the Authors League. If there is ambiguity in the proposal as we have set it forth, then such ambiguity must be clarified. The AAA is intended — and must be — an instrument of the Authors League, or more, to effect the solution of problems which in our opinion are beyond the scope of the individual Guilds.

These problems lie essentially outside of the special fields in which the Guilds work at their best. Licensing of rights, for instance, is a problem of copyright laws. It would be unfair to expect any single Guild to assume the costs and responsibilities of such problems in behalf of all writers. The outcome, likewise, would in all probability be failure.

### *Province of League*

We say, then, that this is a province of the Authors League, and on this we are all agreed. But even as we say it we move into the problem of duplication of groups. If there has been no such duplication so far, it is simply because the League has represented little other than a co-ordinating agency in regard to the Guilds.

It is the opinion of the Joint Committee that the League cannot attack those almost unattacked problems without setting up machinery for the attack. It is our proposal that the AAA be that machinery. But whatever the machinery which the League chooses, duplication will be a problem, and jurisdiction a matter of prolonged consideration.

It is our opinion, therefore, that duplication of energy and jurisdiction of control are not problems confined to consideration of the AAA. The same problems must be faced, discussed, clarified, and settled just as soon as the League establishes any machinery which will effectively satisfy the writer's needs outside of his special field. Duplication seems a prob-

lem at present only because so little has so far been done in the direction of satisfying those needs.

Second, the particular "oversimplified" approach of the AAA to all general objectives. We consider here the choice of the machinery which the Authors League may use. It has seemed to the Committee that the simplicity of the AAA approach to the various problems is part of its strength. If one tool may be used for several purposes, then it seems probable to us that it is a better choice than several tools each adapted to only one purpose. Discussion of the AAA, though, in other possible machinery at this time inasmuch as every existing machinery is defective in some fashion, or a new one in fashion than the AAA were in existence, then there would be basis for comparison.

Until such alternative plans are drawn, then the AAA proposal must stand with all the strength — and weakness — of being the *only* plan. In the meantime, it seems useless to speak of the AAA as taking over such League functions as copyright law and tax law, as if this were an objection. The AAA as any other machinery would be part of the Authors League and can hardly be described as "taking over" a function, any more than comparable machinery. Similarly, even though the argument may be quite sound — it is difficult to reason that the AAA in its need for funds will be in a poorer position to raise them than any alternative project of the Authors League. Until such alternative plans are drawn, these arguments are difficult to follow. It may, perhaps, turn out that the AAA, as the simpler tool, will be the more economical one, so that despite the newness of the approach it will be the cheaper one for the Authors League to adopt.

### *Analysis of Objections*

Many of the objections we find in the report are not truly objections to the idea of an AAA so much as suggestions for revision and clarification in the *proposal* which has been made. Some other objections disappear if we clearly approach the AAA idea as a subsidiary organization of the Authors League.

May we reply to your specific ob-

jections to the AAA as they appear in the Licensing Committee's Report:

(a) "*The vague proposal that the authority is to 'protect, enforce and preserve rights arising out of copyright, etc.'*" . . . It must be understood that vagueness or ominous too-comprehensive powers is not the objective of the Joint Overall Committee in the work it has done. The AAA is a proposal to other writers. It is a proposal subject to modification. If a proposed power seems vague, then obviously suggestions for crystallizing that power are in order. If a proposed power is subject to dangerously broad interpretation, then the committee is as interested as any other writers in limitation of that power. The Committee will welcome a clearer definition of this proposal.

(b) "*... Keeping the bidding open . . .*" It is possible that this proposal is entirely out of place in the AAA set-up. It is certainly no part of the essential purpose of the AAA. On all such matters as this, there should be careful discussion to discover whether existing Guild machinery, or proposed Guild machinery can do the job. If it does or can, then there is no point in the AAA assuming the function.

(c) "*... Handling of writers problems as a whole.*" Mr. Cain's article is an individual opinion. It is not the intent of the Committee that the AAA will assume any function properly residing in a Guild. Limitation of jurisdiction should be arrived at and clearly defined through discussion. It would seem to the Committee that "handling of problems of writers as a whole" might be a clearer approach to the functions of the AAA.

(d) "*... Legal steps apparently with or without the author's consent . . .*" The AAA is a voluntary organization. Its rights are those assigned to it by the author at the time of deposit of his copyright. They are subject to revocability by withdrawal of copyright, and further checked by the necessity of having the author's signature on all



transactions. The Committee does not understand how any transaction can be interpreted as "with or without the author's consent." If any ambiguity, however, has penetrated the proposal, the Committee not only welcomes but demands criticism and clarification.

(e) "... *The right to censor material* ..." It must be remembered that the AAA is not a monopoly. Since an author has the perfect right to market material which is not subject to AAA restrictions, the right to refuse material on grounds of obscenity, etc., can hardly be described as censorship. It is difficult for the Committee to visualize a market in which non-AAA material will not be in demand. It would seem, therefore, that rejection of material cannot in any sense be construed as prejudicing its marketability. In connection with this subject the Committee has had to bear in mind the possibility that obscene material would be purposely placed with the AAA for the sake of involving the AAA in destructive litigation.

### Financial Machinery

(f) "... *The right to collect and disburse money* ..." As long as it is proper for the Dramatist Guild to collect and disburse money, the Committee sees no reason why another agency of the Authors League, the AAA, should be questioned in that function. The Committee has attempted to set up the proper machinery and safeguards for this function. If this machinery and these safeguards seem inadequate, then the Committee welcomes further suggestions.

(g) "... *Conflict with statutes against the practice of law* ..." The Committee has drawn all its proposals with what we believe to be sound legal advice. It would be unwise, however, to activate the AAA without the broadest possible legal opinion on all its activities. It is hardly the intent of the Committee to propose unlawful measures.

(h) "*Legal status of the plan under the anti-trust acts.*" The Committee has spent a large

measure of its energy in the effort to draw up a proposal which would be acceptable to the anti-trust acts. It is our opinion that the AAA, an organization of a voluntary, non-monopoly nature, subject to withdrawal of membership, possessed of no powers direct or indirect to enforce a "closed shop" or in otherwise to restrain trade, is on sound legal footing in regard to the anti-trust acts.

(i) "... *The power of the Authority's National Director* ..." The Committee emphasizes the importance of its project and the better protection of the Director.

### Welcoming

(j) "*Rights ... decided by a majority of directors, which majority could all belong to other Guilds.*" Again, this is a proposal. If the balance of power in the directorate seems improper, then a proper balance must be found.

(k) "*Ineffectiveness of assignments withdrawable in thirty days.*" It has been the intent of the committee to find a formula which will be acceptable to depositing writers and a sufficient check on AAA powers, and at the same time will provide an effective basis for AAA activity. Again, once more, this is a proposal. If writers believe a longer period of notice would be wiser, then let the matter be discussed. There is only one intent: to find an effective formula.

(l) "*Risk of vesting copyright.*" The Committee has spent much of its energy on this particular subject. We recognize this as the greatest risk in the AAA, and the major argument against it. Few of the members of this Committee would entrust their copyrights to an organization which is any degree irresponsible, unchecked, or unlimited in its powers, or from which copyrights could not be withdrawn. We therefore have done all in our power to develop machinery to enforce responsibility and limitation of power, and as a last resource of the individual author

we have introduced the power of revocability. We cannot ourselves visualize any remaining risk in the vesting of copyright. If other writers, however, can still discover such risk, then it is our positive duty by discussion to evolve further safeguards. In connection with this point it should be mentioned that the members of the Joint Overall Committee are themselves copyright owners; that we are as concerned as any other writers in America with the safety of copyright; that the risk of losing control of our copyrights is as appalling to us as it is to any others. But we, perhaps more than the Eastern members of the Licensing Committee, have been impressed with the emptiness of a copyright from which all the subsidiary rights have been sold. We have come to believe that a copyright with all its subsidiary rights intact jointly controlled by the AAA is a better copyright than one entirely stripped of its powers and still solely in the author's name. And so we, through our work on the Overall Committee, have necessarily discussed and profoundly considered this theory of voluntary limited assignment of copyright for almost a year. And it is our conclusion that the possibilities of this theory can be of such benefit to writers in the solution of problems yet unsolved — and to great measure unattacked — that the theory and all its risks warrant unprejudiced, unceasing investigation by all writers in America.

IT is difficult in the scope of a report which is a reply to a report, prepared under pressure of time, to enter into the complex relationships of an AAA, which is merely a fluid proposal, to four different Guilds which are going concerns beset with all the day to day complications of any going concerns. There are vast problems, such as that of the existing Minimum Basic Agreement of the Dramatists Guild. It would seem to the Joint Overall Committee, however, that vast and imponderable though many of the problems are, still with energy and goodwill they can be solved. We, in the ensuing months, will do our part towards that end. And we have every hope



that the Licensing Committee will perhaps find solutions where we cannot.

In conclusion, may we emphasize once again that the concern of this Committee is not with the AAA, but with the needs of writers which in our opinion the AAA can meet. We are not chained to an idea, to a phrase, or to a slogan. We make no religion of the AAA, nor are we dedicated to any such other limited crusade. What we are convinced of — and it is a conviction from which we cannot be shaken — is the inequity that a writer faces in certain fields of his professional life. Help us to destroy these inequities, and we will help you, with courage, with imagination, with unceasing determination. What road we take is a matter of indifference—so long as we take it together, and it takes us there.

## How Subversive Is Hollywood?

ON the evening of July 6 Emmet Lavery, president, and Garrett Graham, member of SWG, debated over Station KMPC with Upton Close and Rupert Hughes on the subject: "Should we belittle communist influence in U. S. motion pictures?"

Mr. Graham opened the forum discussion with a personal tribute to Rupert Hughes, and then said: "Mr. Hughes has written and directed a number of motion pictures. He knows as well as I that the industry is just as much Big Business as General Motors and U. S. Steel — that it is controlled completely from Wall Street. He knows from his own experience the many hands through which a completed script has to pass before it ever goes into production. It has to be read and approved by an associate producer, by the studio's legal department, by an executive or editorial board, and finally by Joseph Breen's sharp-eyed censors of the Producers' Association.

"If a writer were diabolically clever enough to slide subversive propaganda past all these, he still wouldn't be getting anywhere. Each day's work before the cameras is carefully scrutinized by studio executives in the projection room. If a scene or sequence is not to their liking, it is

thrown away, rewritten and shot over again.

"The Bank of America in California and the Chase National Bank in New York handle most motion picture financing. Until these two conservative institutions go Communistic — until the Wall Street Journal starts whooping it up for Moscow — and the Hammer and Sickle flies above the ramparts of San Simeon, America need fear nothing worse from Hollywood than possible death by boredom."

Mr. Hughes, the next speaker on the program, pointed to the recent Henry A. Wallace-Katharine Hepburn meeting at the Gilmore Stadium as evidence of communist influence in Hollywood. He wanted to know why Mr. Wallace did not register as an "enemy agent," and deplored the fact that when he came to town he was met by a "mob of motion picture people." He said: "Some time ago the communists took over the Screen Writers' Guild, and the AAA plan put forward by the Guild in an attempt to take over all writers. If your friends and partners are communists I don't care what you call yourself — you are a communist."

Mr. Lavery, the next speaker observed that if we have a true democracy we have nothing to fear from communism — except the fear of communism. He said: "Fear is not the weapon of free men. It is a tyrant's tool. And we ought to know that by now for we saw what happened in Germany with Hitler, in Italy with Mussolini, in Spain with Franco. In each country the fear of communism was used to divide and destroy all semblance of representative government. And it will happen here if we give way to this kind of mass hysteria."

Emphasizing that he held no brief for Marxian communism and that his social conscience derived from the gospels of the apostles, Mr. Lavery said that hysterical witchhunts and infringements of civil liberties played into the hands of the communists. He quoted a recent *Film Daily* report from Russia to the effect that the Russian regarded the Hollywood product as "reactionary and decadent." He said: "It doesn't look as if American communists were doing very well by the Kremlin."

Upton Close said he was tired of apologies for communism. He quoted

what he described as a communist directive of 22 years ago: "We must wrest the screen from the ruling class and turn it against them."

He advanced the opinion that this directive is being followed. He said society women, bankers and rich persons in general were usually dealt with unsympathetically on the screen, while working people were portrayed in a pleasant light. He described the recent RKO picture, *The Farmer's Daughter*, as an example of subversive propaganda. "The propaganda in this picture grits like sand in the gravy," said Mr. Close. "A conservative politician is attacked as being against the free distribution of milk. The League of Nations is upheld — what right has a film of this kind to raise a point about the League of Nations? This is the sort of stuff handed out in our movies, and I say it is time to stop belittling this kind of stuff."

In the discussion period following the formal statements, Mr. Lavery said that more than 400 pictures are produced in Hollywood in a year, and wanted to know what other pictures were regarded as loaded with subversive propaganda.

Mr. Hughes mentioned *Mission to Moscow*, and Mr. Close named *Action in the North Atlantic*, *Hitler's Children*, *The Ox-Bow Incident*, *Song of Russia* and *Wilson*.

In the course of the discussion Mr. Hughes, who had attacked the American Authors' Authority plan, admitted that he is a loyal and long-standing member of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

(Editor's Note: Mr. Hughes' admission that he is a member of ASCAP is interesting. For ASCAP and AAA have many essential points in common, especially the points on which he has been attacking AAA as "communistic" and "totalitarian.")

He could not have become a member of ASCAP unless he executed an outright, complete and irrevocable assignment to ASCAP exclusively to license throughout the world the non-dramatic public performing rights of every musical composition of which he might be the author of the words and/or music.

Moreover, under the by-laws of ASCAP, Mr. Hughes relinquishes to the organization the sole and ex-



*clusive rights to determine the rates which shall be paid for the use of his works. He agrees that what they earn shall be pooled with the revenue earned by the collective repertoire of the works of all the members, and that he will accept without question such participation as may be awarded him by the Writers Classification Committee, in the aggregate of distributable revenue.*

*Furthermore, Mr. Hughes agrees to be bound absolutely by the Articles of the Association, and by the by-laws, under which its policies are determined and its affairs managed exclusively by its board of directors, which must at all times consist of 12 writers and 12 publishers.*

*Most of the important authors and composers of musical works in the U.S.A. have signed with ASCAP, which is much more rigorous in its conditions than the proposed AAA plan for safeguarding writers' property interests.)*

### Conference on Reissues

CURRENT exhibition of old films and the effect of this increasing practice on motion picture studio employment has brought dissident factions of Hollywood organizations together in an unprecedented move to share in the profits of these re-issued films.

Meeting in the board room of the Screen Writers' Guild on July 9, representatives of the talent groups and the warring Conference of Studio Unions and International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees locals unanimously approved a plan for an immediate economic survey of the re-issue problem, subject to the ratification of the guilds and unions involved.

It was pointed out that of approximately 400 films released for exhibition in the last year, more than 100 or upwards of 25 per cent were old films made in previous years.

Lester Cole, chairman of the Screen Writers' Guild Economic Program Committee, said that these 100 re-issued films displaced from employment at least two or 300 writers, a couple of hundred directors and producers, and thousands of actors and skilled studio workers.

"Our industry is one of the few in the world where talents and skills of its workers, preserved on strips of celluloid, can be used repeatedly without any remuneration to the possessors of those talents and skills," said Cole. "This fact must be recognized, and some plan is called for whereby compensation will be paid for the repeated use of the creative and technical work of those who make our motion pictures."

"Compare motion pictures with the book publishing industry. Writers of books are protected by copyright law, and when their books are re-issued they are compensated for it. Probably the only workers who are not compensated in the reprinting of a book are the original type-setters. If new plates are made, even the type-setters are paid."

Representatives of the Screen Actors' Guild, present at the meeting as observers, pointed out that 35mm. feature and short subject films are being increasingly reprinted in the 16mm. size, and that the original makers of the film should derive some compensation from the exhibition and sale of these 16mm. pictures.

It developed at the meeting that the question of compensation for re-issued films had been brought up in contract negotiations by various Hollywood guilds and unions, and that studio management had always replied that if such compensation were granted to one group all the other organized labor groups in Hollywood would demand it.

It was generally agreed that the executive producers were correct in this attitude, and that all Hollywood labor groups deserved to share in some way in the profits from re-issued films. It was agreed that distribution of such compensation was a problem that would have to be taken up by the individual guilds and unions.

Hugo Butler of the Screen Writers' Guild chaired the meeting. Among the guilds and unions represented were the Screen Actors' Guild and the Production Managers' Guild, which sent observers; the Screen Directors' Guild, the Film Editors, the Script Clerks, the Costumers' Union, the Screen Story Analysts' Guild, the Screen Publicists' Guild, the Society of Motion Picture Art Directors, the Screen Set Designers

Local 1421, the Screen Cartoonists Guild, Local 70 of the Plumbers' Union, the I.B.E.W. Local 40, the Screen Extras' Guild, and Local 946 of the Carpenters Union.

These groups appointed a temporary steering committee to deal with the re-issue question. Members of this committee are Hugo Butler and Lester Cole of the Screen Writers' Guild; Herb Drake of the Screen Publicists' Guild; W. R. Higbie of the Carpenters' Union, and Bernard Vorhaus of the Screen Directors' Guild.

### Comments From Two Critics

*Two of the most distinguished drama and motion picture editors in the United States comment on The Screen Writer in its new format.*

*In the East, Archer Winsten devotes his New York Post column of July 7 to the SWG magazine. Mr. Winsten says in part:*

MONTH in and month out for the past two or three years a pocket-sized magazine out of Hollywood, *The Screen Writer* frankly devoted to the interests of the screen writers who publish, write and read it, has been running circles around all competition. In any given issue it is apt to print more of the well-written, clearly thought "inside" of the Hollywood problems than all other magazines publish in a year.

This should not be surprising. If anyone could get out such a magazine it would be the writers who are already inside the gates, clanking about in their chains of gold, actual or prospective.

Last month the magazine expanded from pocket to arm-size. Not yet comparable to a weekly giant of the circulation leaders, it is larger, though, than the staid monthlies. And this month it matches its size with a vigorous treatment of the problems attendant on "Motion Pictures as a Free Medium of Artistic Expression." It hits the big problem of American movies from several points of view, with ideas from a variety of heads, and without the gentle emptiness of the apologist. The reproduction of a small contribution by this reviewer

has had no effect upon an interest of long duration. *The Screen Writer* never fails to be original and interesting. Frequently, as in this July issue, it is vital and fascinating.

For instance, in addition to the "Freedom" symposium, the Jean Renoir article on Charles Chaplin, *Monsieur Verdoux*, and the parallel he draws between Chaplin's early periods and his latest, and Moliere's similar descent from easily acceptable popularity to critical vilification, is very stimulating. Renoir's emphasis on the value of the individual creator, so clearly seen in every aspect of *Verdoux*, so rarely seen in all American films, is an exceedingly gratifying observation since it was also made in this department's first review of the film.

A second article in the magazine, *Writing and Realization*, by Meyer Levin, tells about his writing and helping produce a documentary in Palestine. If the picture "realizes" anything of the quality he has written in his analysis of its making, it will be worth watching for. In the meantime, the article can also serve an unusually sound instruction on the making of such films and how to think of the component parts.

A third article, *The Future of Screen Writing*, by Sheridan Gibney, faces up to Code vs. Truth. Writes he, "This is the ultimate absurdity to say that profits depend on

a more honest artistic effort but writers must not be given the freedom to make that effort for fear of losing profits." His answer is, in part, "a gradual divorce of the art from the industry."

Thus far *The Screen Writer* has achieved an admirable balance between readability, which implies certain elements of entertainment and humor, and serious thought taken for the good of the industry and all people concerned with it. Although its approach is purely professional, it can be read with pleasure and profit by almost anyone capable of thinking about movies as well as feeling with them.

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*In the West, Virginia Wright, drama editor of the Los Angeles Daily News, recently devoted her widely read column to The Screen Writer. Miss Wright said in part:*

THE *Screen Writer* is three years old this month, and congratulations are in order. From a little six by nine periodical this official voice of the Screen Writers' Guild has grown now, with its handsome new format, into a magazine as

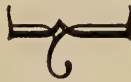
bright in appearance as it is stimulating in content.

The chief success of the magazine, and something of a marvel, too, is the continuing ability of its editorial staff to give its strictly trade material general interest. Evidence of enthusiasm outside the motion picture industry is its sale at bookstands in five states, and distribution in England, Eire, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and Denmark.

While *The Screen Writer* has grown in stature during the past two years its objective has not changed. The magazine was founded for the purpose of giving wider recognition to the craft of screen writing, and in that it has succeeded admirably. For along with its discussion of craft problems, screenwriters have been articulate on subjects ranging from "what's wrong with movie critics" to Gallup polls and red-baiting.

The writing is on the same high quality level of its first issue, and the pitfall of pedantry still is being side-stepped skillfully. The serious discussions have been balanced with humorous exposes of the foibles of the business, and along with righteous, indignant outbursts at abuses some neat incisive satire has brightened the organ's pages.

Again, congratulations, and thanks to *The Screen Writer* for hours of entertaining and informative reading.





# Correspondence

Mr. Tom Tracey, 1885 Veteran Avenue, Los Angeles, writes:

I am sending a copy of a letter which I wrote to *Time Magazine*. I felt *The Screen Writer* would be interested in this instance of a non-industry individual asking for adequate press coverage of the achievements of screen writers, especially since this is in regard to an especially flagrant example of withholding credit.

My letter to *Time* follows:

"In the June 16th issue more than one column is given to a generally laudatory review of a new film, *Possessed*, in which it is stated, '... the picture's writers, director and musicians have done some effective things with sound ... and with story telling ...' But, then, in spite of the fact that lavish attention is given to the actors in the film — by name, of course — the reviewer does not condescend to mention who the praiseworthy writers, director and composer are. THAT, *Time Magazine*, constitutes an incompetent job of reporting.

"Besides that, your subtle implication — in the above quotation — that the achievements of the picture's writers and director may be equated with the performances of the background musicians is patently ridiculous.

"It is my considered guess that the long noticeable — and exasperating — tendency on the part of your Cinema Department to consider it unnecessary to name the directors and writers of the pictures it reviews is nothing else than a direct — and faintly neurotic — result of the gnawing frustration which your reviewers must feel at *their* having to work in near-anonymity. As a *Time*-reader and movie-goer, I consider it a damned sight more important to know who writes and directs the more outstanding mov-

ies than to know who reviews them in *Time*.

"Best wishes for a competent job of cinema reporting."

TOM TRACEY.

Mr. Tracey received the following reply from the editors of *Time Magazine*:

"Dear Mr. Tracey:

"Our reviewer felt that the names of the writers, directors and composers of *Possessed* should be mentioned, but they were later edited out. *Time* does not like to pad a review with a string of names when space is so valuable, since such a list does not interest all our readers. We mention the men behind the scenes only when their contribution is unusually good — or bad."

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The following letter has been received from Peter Noble, editor of *The British Film Yearbook*, 15 Arnos Grove Court, London, N. 11:

I am preparing for publication shortly a book called *The Man You Love To Hate*, a biography of Erich von Stroheim, now acting in French films. I should be grateful if you would publish this letter in order that any of your readers who possess cuttings, articles or photographs of Stroheim, or of films directed and written by Stroheim, might lend me their material for use in my book. All such material will be acknowledged and returned immediately to the people concerned.

I hope you are able to help me in this matter since although there have been books on Stroheim published in French and also in Italian, there has up to now, been no published appreciation in English of the work and influence of one of the most remarkable personalities in the history of the cinema.

## Letter From Brussels

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)

Festival seemed to be directed by American hands. According to certain journalists, that was the reason for the Russian abstention from Brussels; it seems more probable that the Russians, having produced no good films this year, thought it safer for their prestige to keep away from Brussels. The list of awards which last September at the Cannes Festival had seemed partial to Russia, proved this year a considerable amount of diplomacy on the part of the all-Belgian jury of Brussels. It was pointed out that the awards were honoring only the pictures to which they were attributed, disregarding the whole of the national production; and indeed the American and French productions which received two awards each were not as uniformly good as the British or the Italian.

With *Hue and Cry*, *Great Expectations*, *The Overlanders*, *A Matter of Life and Death*, and *Odd Man Out* — which received the award for the best realization — the British proved the variety and range of their qualities. Though each of these pictures has some weak parts, the whole British production is easily the most impressive ensemble. The Italians presented four wonderful pictures: *Paisa*, *Vivere in Pace*, *Il Sole Sorge Ancora*, *Sciussia*, each of which draws its inspiration directly from reality. Neither the Americans nor the French, to whom the same sources were available, have succeeded yet in transferring those themes to the screen with such breathless realism and emotion; however, one wonders where the Italian film makers will turn to when the use of such subjects is no longer timely.

The Mexican production which was also given an award, that of the best photography, for Gabriel Figueroa's work in *Enamorada* — he al-



ready received that award in Cannes for *Maria Candelaria*—brought no revelation. In *La Perla* it renewed some well-worn themes by putting them in new sceneries.

THE award of the Grand Prix du Festival to René Clair's *Le Silence Est d'Or* (*Man About Town*) crowns both the American and the French productions, since it is a joint Pathé (French) and RKO undertaking: René Clair had his screenplay approved in Hollywood before shooting it in France, and American funds frozen in Paris contributed to supply him with the best conditions for a perfect production. Beside, Clair now combines in himself a Hollywood technique with a French imagination and he succeeded in making *Le Silence Est d'Or* a delightful picture, something like a perfectly orchestrated ballet where each theme is being repeated by all the characters with varied shades of humaneness and irony. The France it presents is very much the kind Hollywood producers like to see on the screen, but there is more to it than flirtations at the Folies-Bergeres and café terraces. With a running commentary in English spoken by Maurice Chevalier, *Le Silence Est d'Or* is bound to be a success in the States as it is in Europe. Such a successful instance of Franco-American collaboration may show the way to further productions and infuse a new blood in both Hollywood and European productions.

*Le Silence Est d'Or* is a technically perfect picture, but not a powerful one. The motion picture critics felt more attracted to the other good French movie, *Le Diable au Corps*, from Raymond Radiguet's famous novel of the '20s, to which they gave their own award. That stirring portrayal of adolescent love fulfilling itself in spite of society and rushing headlong towards disaster might have gotten the main award if it were not for the unconventional ideas scattered through the dialogue which, in spite of its moral conclusion may cause the film to be condemned by the more puritanical critics.

The interference of morals with motion picture making has been highlighted by a lecture given at the Catholic Film Congress held in Brussels at the same time as the Festival, by Mr. William H. Mooring, of the *Tidings*, Los Angeles Catholic pub-

lication. The instances Mr. Mooring gave . . . of advices offered to directors seem to indicate that propaganda can be used in films, as long as it is Catholic propaganda—for the moral principles he upholds as necessary essentially amount to that. When a journalist tried to obtain from Eric Johnston some enlightenment about the distinction between propaganda and moral principles which must be expounded in movies, Mr. Johnston very adroitly eluded the question and no one will know what principles are to be considered propaganda and must be avoided, and what others are moral and must be upheld.

Mr. Johnston's reputation as a diplomat grew on another occasion when a journalist asked him whether the American pictures shown at the Festival were really the best ones. Mr. Johnston answered that he was an amateur and couldn't judge. To the rest of the public the selection shown didn't seem representative of the American production and one wonders whether there might not be a better way of choosing pictures than to take one from each of the major studios. Of all the films shown *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Yearling* were unanimously approved. As for *It's a Wonderful Life* which was thought somewhat childishly optimistic, it found an unexpected support in Italian journalists who thought it was the only Christian picture of the Festival. The messages which most well-meaning American pictures try to convey are generally lost on European audiences who are weary of any indoctrination and scoff at sentimentality as well as at preaching. The lesson should come out of the facts, of each significant detail; and there is no need for piling them up, either: the Italian pictures which are fraught with meaning are breathlessly paced. It is because William Wyler aims towards that goal that he received such an enthusiastic reception in Brussels. People saluted him for his technique, and also for his choice of a good subject: the *Best Years of Our Lives* was thought the most important and timely topic.

ROBERT SHERWOOD received the award for the best screen play.

That was the *only* time a screen writer was mentioned at the Festival. The organizers seemed completely

unaware of the importance of screenplays: on the programs which gave the list of films to be seen and which displayed the names of their directors and their stars, *no screen writer's name ever appeared*.

Also, to guide the jury in their appreciation of each film, a special chart had been established ascribing a certain coefficient to the various elements which make a movie: direction, photography, music, acting, etc. In that chart, the screenplay was supposed to count only as 10 percent, and the dialogue as 5 percent. *Only 15 percent of the components of a movie ascribed to the screen writer!*

The films shown at the Festival proved abundantly that there is no good movie without a good subject, and that the best films are those where the screenplay has been carefully worked out because the writer and the director had worked closely together, or were the same person: viz: René Clair, Carol Reed, Roberto Rossellini.

Unfortunately there was no one in Brussels to uphold the writer's rights. The only screen writer officially present was Charles Spaak, the co-author of *La Grande Illusion* and other successes. One day he was introduced to someone as the brother of Jean-Paul Spaak, Belgium's Prime Minister—which he is—and he was heard to mutter: "*What's the use of having written 92 screenplays, and be still introduced as someone's brother?*"

What's the use for screen writers to write if they don't make themselves known? The Festival might have given them such an opportunity. The conference of motion picture technicians which is going to take place in Prague had been invited to Brussels, but refused on the ground that the atmosphere wouldn't be suitable. Indeed the Festival, mostly intended for commercial purposes, became a publicity stunt and the opportunity for producers and exhibitors from all over the world to talk shop. A considerable amount of business was transacted in Brussels this June. However, a Festival's first aim should be a gathering neither of the critics or the buyers of films, but of the *makers* of pictures. It is a unique opportunity for them to see the world production, compare notes, get new ideas, learn different techniques. Thus should a Festival really promote the making of motion pictures.



## Letter From Paris

*The Syndicat des Scenaristes of Paris, representing the organized screen writers of France, has written the Screen Writers' Guild concerning the attitude of the Brussels Film Festival promoters toward writers, and has asked the SWG join in the international protest. SWG has responded to this request for joint action. The letter from the French screen writers follows:*

We have decided to boycott by all the means which are at our disposal the affairs or festivals where no recognition is accorded to the authors of scenarios and dialogues.

The further means which we plan to utilize to gain recognition for the names of scenarists have been envisaged. One of these means which is in our power is to act on the committee of selection which chooses the French films and where we are represented; for example, if we should resign from the committee, the selection would be tainted with irregularity.

In fact, we believe that the action by the press is already sufficient, especially if it is supported by international action on the part of English and American scenarists.

I believe it would be useful to draw up with the least possible delay a communication protesting against the manner in which the scenarists are treated at these festivals. It would be expedient if the communication were passed on at the same time to the English and American journals.

Here is the text of the communication which we have drawn up apropos the Brussels Film Festival; we think that it would serve as a basic statement for this tri-partite protest:

"The Syndicate of Scenarists is astonished and regretful that the names of the authors of films, that is to say of the scenarists and dialogueists, do not figure anywhere on the publicity placards, or anywhere on the handbills, or anywhere on the programs edited by the organizers of the Belgian World Film Festival.

"In any case in the future, where these acts are repeated in regard to other film festivals, the scenarists have decided to prohibit the projection of their films."

LOUIS CHAVANCE,  
General Secretary.

## Books: John Gunther's Notes on the Hollywood Scene

"THE first of the important Hollywood guilds, and still one of the strongest and best run, is the Screen Writers' Guild, of which Dudley Nichols was president for two stormy years. The producers tried to break it up with a company union called the Screen Playwrights; this perished after a vote under the Wagner Act."

So writes John Gunther in his new reportorial encyclopedia of contemporary America. (*Inside U. S. A.* Harper & Brothers. \$5.)

He says other things about Hollywood — shrewd, witty, acute and sometimes over-simplified observations. His definition of the motion picture colony: "That fabulous world of profit hunger, agents, ulcers, all the power and vitality and talent and craftsmanship with so little genius, options, dynastic confusions, goona-goon, the vulgarization of most personal relationships, and 8000 man hours spent on a sequence that takes three minutes."

His ideological division of Hollywood seems a trifle arbitrary: on one side the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, and on the other the Arts, Sciences and Professions Committee group, which, he says, "has a considerably more distinguished list of members." He asked a Hollywood friend who was the "brains" of the MPA; the answer: "the College of Cardinals in MGM."

He gives considerable space to the studio labor situation, which he describes as "difficult and sinuous."

He writes: "All the big studios are antilabor, even the most 'liberal.'" After paying tribute to the Screen Writers' Guild as one of the strongest and best run organizations in Hollywood, he says: "Actors also have a powerful guild, as do the camera men and technicians; directors have a guild too, but it is weak, largely because they do not need as much protection as actors, and so pay less attention to their own organization. Beyond all this is the celebrated International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE), an AF of L union which has had a highly disagreeable past to say the least."

He observes that while the producers are "almost helpless" in disputes between the IATSE and CSU, "they naturally like the IATSE, much as they hated it before, better than they like the CSU."

Behind the politico-economic-social stresses Gunther feels in Hollywood he discerns two explanations. One is that "a fantastic number of people receive fantastic salaries." They only reached the high brackets at the time taxation began to bite hard, and this made them detest Roosevelt and liberalism. The other is that many others, both talent people and executives, receive "tidy salaries like a thousand dollars a week, feel a sense of subconscious guilt at earning so much money, and so tend to submerge or deflect their bad conscience by generosity to all kinds of leftist causes and escape valve politics."

This physically heavy (1024 pages) volume does not make for heavy reading. It is done with the light touch. It has no pretensions to profundity. It is a reporter's heterogeneous portrait of the U. S. A. But it is a documented report, enlivened by personal anecdote and enriched with a tolerant understanding. It is as contemporary as a daily newspaper and parts of it already seem a little dated.

But in this fourth volume of his best-selling "Inside" series, Mr. Gunther is more than amusing and competent. He shows considerable forthright courage in dealing with race relations, especially in the deep South, and in exposing some of the unpleasant running sores in city, state and federal governments. He turns the light on some dark places in our national life; the effect will be antiseptic.

You will find in the book a good quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald: "France was a land, England was a people, but America, having about it still the quality of the idea, was harder to utter — it was the graves at Shiloh, and the tired, drawn, nervous faces of its great men, and the country boys dying in the Argonne for a phrase that was empty before their bodies withered. It was a willingness of the heart. . . ."

R. S.



# News Notes

★ Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture Series are: Pabst and Realism (III): *Die Dreigroschenoper*, August 4, 5, 6, 7; The Films of Fritz Lang (IV): *M*, August 8, 9, 10; The Psychological Drama (IV): *Maedchen in Uniform*, August 11, 12, 13, 14; A German Comedy: *Emil and the Detectives*, August 15, 16, 17; Legend and Fantasy (V): *Fahrman Maria*, August 18, 19, 20, 21; The Psychological Drama (V): *The Eternal Mask*, August 22, 23, 24; The German Documentary Film (I): *Olympia*, Part 1, August 25, 26, 27, 28; The German Documentary Film (II): *Olympia Part II* August 29, 30, 31.

★ Under the chairmanship of Herbert Biberman, Edward Dmytryk, Fritz Lang, Kenneth Macgowan and Dudley Nichols, American Gallery Films and the People's Educational Center are presenting a series of film portraits of different countries and their people. The films are being shown at the Screen Cartoonists' Guild hall, Yucca and Vine. The current schedule follows: August 1, Mexico: *The Wave*; August 8, United States: *Abraham Lincoln*; August 15, Germany: *Variety*; August 22, Germany: *Kamaradschaft*; August 29, Sweden: *The Atonement of Gosta Berling*; September 5, Holland: *Carnival in Flanders*; September 12, France: *La Marseillaise*; September 19, France: *Passion of Joan of Arc*. Admission will be by membership subscription and information can be obtained by calling Hollywood 6291.

★ SWG member Meyer Levin, whose article in the July issue of *The Screen Writer* on film making in Palestine aroused national interest, reports that the documentary feature film he described will be ready for release this month under the title *Survivors*. At the same time Viking Press will publish Levin's novel, based on the film story, but titled *My Father's House*.

★ SWG member Leonide Moguy, who has been working in Paris on

the adaptation and screen play of Pierre Benoit's novel, *Bethsabée*, reports keen interest among members of the French Syndicat des Scenaristes in the methods and projects of SWG.

★ Recent additions to the Hollywood exodus to France are SWG members Edward Eliscu and Henry Meyers, who are now in Paris working on *Alice in Wonderland*.

★ Actors Lab is putting on a series of experimental one act plays. SWG member Malvin Wald's *Talk in Darkness* was presented recently. Mary Tarcai, Lab secretary, asks writers of one act plays to submit scripts. Some of the plays are produced in veterans' hospitals after premiering at the Lab Workshop, 1455 N. Laurel.

★ On July 17th, 18th and 19th the Pasadena Playhouse Patio Theatre staged *Operation Peace*, a fantasy written by Malvin Wald and Eli Jaffe.

★ In his contribution to the June issue of *The Screen Writer*, Niven Busch referred to the University of Southern California motion picture department as "Clara Beranger's Cinema Workshop." In a note to the editor Clara Beranger writes that while she teaches courses in screen writing at USC, she disclaims credit for the whole department, which is called The Cinema Workshop.

★ The Olga Shapiro Play Contest Committee announces August 1 as the date for publication of the Award. Members of the committee are John Gassner, Margaret Webster and Kermit Bloomgarden.

★ Pasadena Community Playhouse announces James M. Barrie's *Alice-Sit-By-The-Fire* for August 5-10.

★ Erskine Caldwell's new novel, *The Sure Hand of God*, will be published by Duell Sloan & Pearce in October. The same firm announces Dorothy B. Hughes' *In a Lonely Place*, a mystery novel, for fall publication, and Theodore Pratt's *Mr. Thurtle's Trolley* for August.

★ SWG member Robert Carson's new novel, *Stranger in Our Midst*, published by Putnam's in July, is his first book since World War II, in which he served for 39 months in the air corps.

★ SWG member Eugene Vale's book, *The Technique of Screenplay Writing*, is being published in a Spanish language edition by the Sociedad de Autores de Mexico.

★ The new novel by Alfred Hayes, a recent contributor to *The Screen Writer* and author of the best-selling novel *All Thy Conquests*, is *Shadow of Heaven*. Howell & Soskin will publish it in October.

★ SWG member Marc Connelly is now associate professor of playwriting in Yale University's Graduate School of Fine Arts.

★ The Raymond MacDonald Alden Award of the Dramatists' Alliance of Stanford University for 1947 was won by *Dutch Courage*, a short play by SWG member Alan Drady.

★ The Modern Theater, 1545 Broadway, N. Y. C., which announces its opening, states its policy includes the encouragement of new ideas, an equality of importance among all personnel, the maintenance of high quality entertainment, and an unbiased choice of employees.

★ Emmet Lavery, President of the Screen Writers' Guild, received word recently of a special grant of honor from the Catholic Theater Conference, meeting in its tenth year at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He is the holder of the first Life Membership ever granted by the Conference.

The Conference accompanied the Award with this statement:

"The Conference is happy to count the most successful Catholic playwright as one of its most energetic workers now just as he was ten years ago when he was instrumental in its founding."



# Manuscript Market

MARCH 1, 1947 TO JULY 1, 1947

LISTING THE AUTHORS, TITLES AND CHARACTER OF LITERARY MATERIAL RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY THE MOTION PICTURE STUDIOS

## EAGLE-LION STUDIOS

**ARNOLD B. ARMSTRONG** (with Audrey Ashley) Corkscrew Alley, Unpublished Story  
**AUDREY ASHLEY** (with Arnold B. Armstrong) Corkscrew Alley, Unpublished Story  
**IRVING G. BARRY**, Dealer's Choice, Unpublished Story  
**TOM W. BLACKBURN** (with Fenton Earnshaw) Gangway For Murder, Unpublished Story  
**DORCAS COCHRAN**, Angel With An Ankle, Unpublished Story  
**MONTE F. COLLINS** (with Julian Peyser) Broadway Ballad, Unpublished Story  
**PAUL DE SAINTE COLOMBE** (with Katherine Lanier) The Miracle Of Jeremiah Jimson, Unpublished Story  
**ALBERT DEUTSCH**, Catch Me Before I Kill, Article  
**FENTON EARNSHAW** (with Tom W. Blackburn) Gangway For Murder, Unpublished Story  
**ABEN KANDEL**, Career In Manhattan, Screen-play  
**KING FEATURES SYNDICATE**, Prince Valiant, Comic Strip  
**KATHERINE LANIER** (with Paul de Sainte Colombe) The Miracle of Jeremiah Jimson, Unpublished Story  
**JULIAN PEYSER** (with Monte F. Collins) Broadway Ballad, Unpublished Story  
**ERIC TAYLOR**, Manacled Lady, Unpublished Story  
**IRENE WINSTON**, Bury Me Dead, Radio Script

## ENTERPRISE PRODUCTIONS

**LION FEUCHTWANGER**, Proud Destiny, Novel  
**LADISLAS FODOR**, Eugene Aram, Adaptation of Novel by Bulwer Lytton  
**NANCY MITFORD**, Pursuit Of Love, Novel  
**FRANCIS WICKWARE**, Tuesday To Bed, Novel

## SOL LESSER PRODUCTIONS

**GEORGE AGNEW CHAMBERLAIN**, Bride of Bridal Hill, Novel  
**JULIUS EVANS**, It Comes Naturally, Unpublished Story  
**ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**, Kidnaped and David Balfour, Novels  
**LESLIE WHITE**, Harness Bull, Book

## METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER

**FREDERICK NEBEL**, The Bribe, Unpublished Short Story  
**I. A. R. WYLIE**, A Quarter For An Angel, Unpublished Story

## PARAMOUNT PICTURES

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**ROY CHANSLOR**, Hazard, Novel  
**EDNA LEE**, The Web Of Days, Novel

## REPUBLIC

**REX BEACH**, Don Careless, Novel  
**EARL FELTON**, Another Dawn, Unpublished Story  
**CHARLES LARSON**, The Miracle Of Charlie Dakin, Unpublished Story  
**ROBERT E. MCATEE**, It's Murder, She Says, Unpublished Story

## RKO RADIO

**AENEAS MacKENZIE**, The Black Knight, Screen-play and Treatment  
**ALBERT MALTZ**, Evening In Modesto, Unpublished Story and Treatment  
**JOSEPH MONCURE MARCH**, The Setup, Poem  
**DORE SCHARY** (with George Seaton) Lewis & Clark Expedition, Unpublished Story  
**BUDD SCHULBERG**, The Harder They Fall, Book  
**GEORGE SEATON** (with Dore Schary) Lewis & Clark Expedition, Unpublished Story  
**IRWIN SHAW**, Education Of The Heart, Unpublished Story  
**CORNELL WOOLRICH**, The Boy Cried Murder, Published Story  
**T. R. YBARRA**, Bolivar The Passionate Warrior, Book

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**T. E. HELSETH**, The Chair For Martin Rome, Novel  
**CONSTANCE JONES** (with Guy Jones) Untitled, Novel  
**GUY JONES** (with Constance Jones) Untitled, Novel  
**SOMERSET MAUGHAM**, Neil McAdam, Short Story  
**GEORGE M. MOORAD**, Behind The Iron Curtain, Book  
**DOROTHY THOMAS**, My Heart Is Like A Singing Bird, Short Story

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**LUCILLE S. PRUMBS** (with Sarah B. Smith) Ever The Beginning, Unproduced Play  
**PETER VIERTTEL**, The Children, Unpublished Story

## UNIVERSAL-INTERNATIONAL

**ROBERT CARSON**, Come Be My Love, Unpublished Story  
**THOMAS DUNCAN**, Gus The Great, Novel  
**BAYNARD KENDRICK**, Lights Out, Novel  
**ARTHUR MILLER**, All My Sons, Play  
**HENRY MORTON ROBINSON**, The Great Snow, Novel  
**FREDERICK WAKEMAN**, The Saxon Charm, Novel

## WARNER BROTHERS

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**DIETRICH HANNEKEN** (with Aleck Block), Sunburst, Unpublished Story  
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**GEORGE SKLAR**, Two Worlds Of Johnny Truro, Novel

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The Taft-Hartley Law

Toward a New Realism

Disunion in Vienna

Some of My Worst Friends

"Darling! You Mean . . . -"

Love in Hopewell

As I Remember Birdie

Gregg Toland: the Man and His Work

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What Is a License of Literary Property?

French Cinema in the U. S.

As the British See It

Some English Questions

How One Movie Sale Was Made

French Motion Picture School

And further articles by ROBERT ARDREY, SYDNEY BOX, HUGO BUTLER, RICHARD COLLINS, VALENTINE DAVIES, EARL FELTON, ST. CLAIR McKELWAY, EMERIC PRESSBURGER, IRVING PICHEL, GEORGE SEATON, ARTHUR STRAWN, PETER VIERTEL, JOSEPH WECHSBERG, KATHLEEN WINSOR and others.

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# The Screen Writer

*Absolutely, Rep. Hartley—Positively, Sen. Taft!*

By

PHILIP DUNNE and M. E. COHN

I. A. L. DIAMOND: *Darling! You Mean....?*

GEORGE SEATON: *One Track Mind on a Two Way Ticket*

RICHARD G. HUBLER: *As I Remember Birdie*

F. HUGH HERBERT: *Subject: Bindle Biog*

LILLIAN BOS ROSS: *How One Movie Sale Was Made*

NOEL MEADOW: *French Cinema in the U.S.A.*

MORRIS E. COHN: *What Is a License to Literary Property?*

## THE WRITER'S SHARE:

*Comments on The Economics of Screen Writing* By SAMUEL  
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DAVID O. SELZNICK, HOWARD LINDSAY, IRVING PICHEL  
and MILLEN BRAND.... Page 29

Vol. 3, No. 4      September, 1947      25c



Editorials • Report and  
Comment • Correspondence •  
News Notes • Screen Credits



# Letter From Paris

From France HENRY MYERS writes this letter, co-signed by EDWARD ELISCU and AL LEWIN. All are members of SWG and are on a screen play assignment in Paris.

TO Président and Board of SWG: Recently we met the President and Board of the *Syndicat des Scénaristes*, at what turned out to be a special meeting which they had called for the purpose.

It seems that we three are the first American screen writers to profit by the new reciprocal agreement which they told us is going into effect, by which we are under the protection of their organization and its rules. Their president, Henri Jeanson, toasted us in some of the most delicious champagne I ever had, stating that they considered it a historic occasion, the first of many such to follow, and expressing the hope that they themselves would similarly go to Hollywood and have the pleasure of meeting their American colleagues. I responded in English, after realizing with horror that I had been speaking my broken French to the greatest word-experts in Paris. I do believe, and Eliscu and Lewin agree, that a very friendly relationship exists, which we can be instrumental in strengthening.

We should like to convey to you something which is not generally understood in Hollywood: that the French writers have a standing, a tradition, and a resulting strength which has been somewhat beyond our reach, and which make them very desirable and valuable friends to have. Also, their organization is patently extremely prosperous; actually they themselves are a wealthy, vested interest. They own two palaces—the word is used literally, not as a figure of speech—one of which dates back to their founder, Beaumarchais; in these they meet and transact their business. We have an appointment with their

(Continued on Page 41)

# The Screen Writer

Vol. 3, No. 4

SEPTEMBER, 1947

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# Absolutely, Rep. Hartley— Positively, Sen. Taft

PHILIP DUNNE and  
MORRIS E. COHN

*PHILIP DUNNE is a member of the SWG Executive Board and a contributor of previous articles on labor policy. MORRIS E. COHN is counsel for the SWG and has contributed several articles on the legal and tax problems of writers.*

**A**N ANALYSIS of the extraordinary statutory omnibus commonly called the Taft-Hartley Act can be no more exact in a legal or scientific sense than the interpretation of a dream. Indeed, the Act has a strong dream-like quality; it is a rendering in cold legal prose of the voluptuous fantasies which beguiled the slumbers of the most reactionary elements in American life during their long and dreadful night. It is a law which solemnly sets out to resist the irresistible, to correct the incorrigible, and to fashion order out of the raw materials of disorder.

No one knows exactly what all of it means. No one even knows who wrote it, though it is widely believed that Senator Taft and Representative Hartley would have difficulty defending their claim to screen credit against the rival contention of the National Association of Manufacturers (if that organization desired to publicize its contribution).

Senator Taft and Mr. Hartley have already flatly disagreed on the meaning of the Act. The latter says that the new coal agreement is a violation, the former says it is not. Perhaps it would be unkind to seek a political explanation for this difference of opinion, though Mr. Hartley counts few coal miners among his suburban New Jersey constituents and Senator Taft may have pressing need of miners' votes, come the fall of '48. But it is not the purpose of this article to discuss the political gyrations of legislators, nor even to attempt a general analysis of the Act. What interests us is how the new law affects the Screen Writers'

Guild, and specifically how it will work for or against us during our negotiations for a new contract in 1949.

Even to this extent, we cannot be as specific as we should like to be. In fact, the co-authors of this article, even as Mr. Hartley and Senator Taft, found themselves disagreeing as often as they agreed on the meaning of this paragraph or that.

We are not dealing with infallible oracles here. We are concerned with language, intent, legal interpretations and thousands of judicial decisions to come. And this is the sort of law which turns even the highest courts into juridical Donnybrooks. On one point we do agree: *the Taft-Hartley Act provides no help for peaceful law-abiding unions in obtaining fair contracts through collective bargaining.* Its machinery is so patently misdirected, its provisions so burdensome, that it virtually invites a union to resort to the old primitive rule of force. The natural corollary to this is that it is precisely the small, weak union which must suffer, precisely the tough, militant union which can afford to laugh at the legislators and obtain its contract by other methods, precisely the rapacious, union-hating employer who stands to gain the most.

**A**S A CASE in point, consider the recent coal agreement. It was largely a hysterical desire to "get" John L. Lewis which drove the bill by a large majority through both houses of Congress and over President Truman's veto. Yet Mr. Lewis has lost



no sleep — and little time. He has negotiated the best contract in the history of the United Mine Workers, and has even managed to include provisions barring the application of punitive sections of the Act. Within a month of the law's passage, the miners have made a joke of it. The United Automobile Workers and similar powerful outfits are joining in the fun.

Unfortunately, though we see the point of the joke, we are not in a position to share in the laughter. We have yet to resort to an open trial of brute strength with our employers. We needed law to help us obtain our present contract. That law, the Wagner Act, has now been distorted beyond recognition. We must face the possibility that our new contract will have to be obtained without recourse to the protection of law.

Prentice-Hall, Inc., which is not noted for its pro-labor bias, has put out some interesting circulars explaining the Taft-Hartley Act to managerial clients. We quote: "(The Act is) far-reaching in its control of labor relations. Almost every relationship with employees is affected. . . . The new labor law gives you (management) new and powerful advantages which you should begin to use at once, but the law is unusually tricky, with many of its benefits buried in a maze of complicated clauses. . . ."

We have been in the maze for several weeks, and have emerged with a few pertinent facts. First, it should be understood that, since we are operating under an old contract, not all of the "new and powerful advantages" given our employers affect us immediately. But they will begin to affect us the moment we open negotiations for a new contract.

*Our Guild Shop.* The law strikes hard at the vital matter of union security. There is no historical justification for the "union shop" limitations which the new law puts on trade unions. Few strikes have been called on this issue. Employers in general have recognized the wisdom of the union shop and have enjoyed the stability and responsibility it promotes.

Yet the Taft-Hartley Act levels its heaviest guns on union security clauses. The outlawing of the closed shop does not affect us. But let us consider Section 9 (e). This requires any union which wishes to obtain union shop (or Guild shop) first to show that 30 percent of the employees within the bargaining unit desire such a shop, and then to petition for an NLRB election to decide the matter, by majority vote of all qualified employees (not merely union members), *if no question of representation exists*. The last clause is important. A claim by a rival union, however weak, may be found sufficient cause to delay the election. Add to this the probability that the new NLRB will be so

swamped with employee and employer complaints that to bring about an election may require anywhere from six months to a year, and it begins to resemble so many bear traps.

And that isn't all. Subsection (2) provides that at any time after a year from the last certification, 30 percent of the employees within the unit can force a new election on this issue. This is virtually an invitation to employers and dissident minorities to keep a union in turmoil on the fundamental issue of its own security.

*Filing of Information.* Section 9 (f) requires any union desiring certification under the Act to file certain information with the Secretary of Labor: a detailed statement of its constitution and by-laws; method of calling meeting, disbursing funds, salaries, etc. etc. Section 9 (g) further requires a union desiring certification to *prove* that it and *any organization with which it is affiliated* have furnished every one of their members with annual financial reports. In other words, the certification of the Screen Writers' Guild could presumably be postponed at a critical time, if the producers could get one member, any member, of the Authors' League to say he had not received his financial report.

And now hear this. Section 9 (h) stipulates that a union may not be certified unless each of its officers and the officers of its parent group has filed an affidavit that he "is not a member of the Communist Party *or affiliated with such party*." The penalties for false statements under this section are extreme. Note the tricky phrase we have underlined. "Affiliated" (apparently something different from *membership*) might mean anything, depending on the political climate of the moment and on the whim of the individual who has the power to define the word. One does not have to be a Communist or a Communist sympathizer to resent this section, nor to understand how it might be used to deny bargaining rights to a union any of whose officers have been politically active anywhere to the left of center, or whose notions of civil liberties are at variance with those of Representative Hartley and Senator Taft. This section has nothing to do with sound labor relations or industrial peace. It is entirely political, impudent, and probably unconstitutional.

To a public which has been told that the Act was designed to correct abuses it is startling to note that no mention is made of rightist extremism, or of racial or religious discrimination by employer or union.

*Discrimination.* Section 8 (a) 3 could be subtitled "Promotion of Union Disloyalty." Boiled down, this is what it says: if a member of a union is suspended or

expelled for any reason other than failure to pay his dues (there is no mention of assessments) it is an unfair labor practice, if the *employer* fires him or refuses to hire him on the grounds that it would mean violation of a union shop agreement. Thus, if a group of Guild members formed a dual union or a company union, and were forthwith expelled from the Guild, the studios would be compelled by law to keep them on the payroll. Under this section, the democratically inspired and controlled discipline of our Guild can no longer be enforced. This paragraph, ironically, falls under the general heading of "Unfair Labor Practices by Employers." The new law then goes on to define "Unfair Labor Practices by Unions." These at least have the merit of directness.

*Jurisdictional Strikes.* Section 8 (b) 4 is apparently concerned with jurisdictional strikes and secondary boycotts. It looks straight-forward if you don't happen to relish these practices, but it fails to distinguish between a jurisdictional strike cooked up by a union and one forced on the union by an employer. The law elsewhere provides for a 60-day cooling-off period before any strike can be called. During this period, the employer can recognize a dual union, he can promote a company union, he can do almost anything in an effort to split the union. No matter what he does, no matter how illegal his own actions, a strike called in retaliation or self defense by the union is illegal and the strikers lose their status as employees. This kind of "jurisdictional" strike is almost endemic in the motion picture industry. This section of the Act can only aggravate the condition and may drastically affect our Guild.

*Free Speech.* Section 8 (c) affirms the right of a union to free speech, but contains a curious wording which denies a union the right to "promise benefit" to employees it seeks to represent. Presumably this means bribes, but it could easily be construed to mean a promise of higher wages or better working conditions.

*Disruption.* Section 9 (c) 1 defines the conditions under which a petition for bargaining rights can be filed. The answer is that anyone can file one, at any time, whether or not a union already has a contract in the field, though no election can be held until a year has elapsed since the last one. Another union, a single employee, the employer himself (if he "alleges" that "one or more individuals" among his employees have presented a claim), any one of them can force a union into long and expensive litigation at any time, regardless of the duration and validity of the union's contract. By virtue of this paragraph, a Guild contract takes

on something of the aspect of a standard studio writing contract: the writer is bound for the full term, but the producer gets options.

Had enough? There are still a few more points which should be made.

*Political Contributions.* The Guild has not been in the habit of making contributions to political candidates, but that isn't all that Sec. 304 prohibits. It forbids *contribution or expenditure in connection with* any election at which political candidates are to be chosen. This could easily mean expenditure, such as the mimeographing of a Guild bulletin advising our membership to vote against an anti-union proposition which will be voted on a ballot along with political candidates.

*Statute of Limitations.* Under the new law, the NLRB will not act on a charge based on unfair labor practices that are more than six months old. In other words, if the employer can conceal the act for six months, he is in the clear. It could take, for instance, several years to obtain proof of company domination or collusion with a dual union which might be set up against us under other elastic sections of the Act.

*Suits.* Section 301-C, permits a union to be sued in "any district in which its duly authorized officers or agents are engaged in representing or acting for employee members." In other words, we could be sued in New York because we frequently send officers there on Authors' League business. This is only one of many similar inconveniences to unions which the Act encourages employers to use.

*Procedure.* For tedious hot weather reading, we recommend the sections of the new law pertaining to procedure. Boiled down, they amount to repeal of the Norris-LaGuardia Act and the proclamation of an open season to use injunctions on the unions.

*Penalties.* The Taft-Hartley Act democratically provides equal fines for violations of its provisions. The Screen Writers' Guild and its members are assessed on the same scale as, say, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer or 20th Century-Fox. Fines are not deductible for tax purposes but *can* be charged off to the stockholders.

WE CAN assure you that we have not enjoyed preparing this analysis. Aside from the mental strain induced by following the nimble minds of NAM's lawyers, we have found the subject matter dishearten-

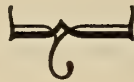


ing. We can only recommend to the members of the Guild that they prepare for contract negotiations with the understanding that anything the Guild obtains it can obtain only by its own unaided efforts. The law is now weighted heavily against us.

As is often the case the most grievous burdens are imposed on those who obey the law as a matter of course. There are loopholes and detours, not forbidden, but

not available to guilds which do not have the power of coal, steel, or automobiles behind them. But for all guilds and unions, little or big, and for all guild members one remedy is equally available.

These burdens were put on us by way of a law. They can be removed in the same way. Regardless of party, regardless of general guild policy, access to the ballot is every individual's sovereign remedy.



## Ben Scribbling Faces Life—and Budgets

*The following Radio Writers Guild brief treatise on membership problems may be of general interest to other writers:*

PRODUCER: Look, Ben, I need some cooperation.

SCRIBBLING: Sure.

PRODUCER: I got a budget of ten thousand on this show, and here's the way it breaks down. The star — supporting cast — orchestra — guests. Sounds like a great show, don't it?

SCRIBBLING: You bet.

PRODUCER: Now this leaves me a little cramped on my writing budget. I hate to offer you a lousy fifty bucks a week, but I've got to have that Scribbling touch!

SCRIBBLING: Fifty bucks!

PRODUCER: Just till we get started. And there isn't much to write. A few topical jokes at the opening, a little crossfire between the star and the band leader. A spot with the guest. How about it?

SCRIBBLING: But — fifty bucks! On a ten thousand dollar show?

PRODUCER: Look at the budget, and show me where I can trim. Remember — AFRA, and the musicians are organized!

# Darling! You Mean...?

I. A. L. DIAMOND

*I. A. L. DIAMOND, a member of SWG, is a contract writer at a major studio. He is a previous contributor to this magazine, and his poem, Hollywood Jabberwocky, in the June issue, has been widely reprinted and quoted.*

IT WAS a tense moment in one of the better war pictures. The remnants of an American patrol were moving cautiously through the Jap-infested jungle. The green lieutenant in charge of the group, obviously uneasy, fell in beside the veteran sergeant.

"It's quiet," he said.

"Yeah," grumbled the sergeant. "Too quiet!"

At that point, they lost me. As a youthful devotee of the Saturday matinee, I had seen too many covered-wagon epics which featured the same exchange of dialogue between the young scout and the seasoned old Indian-fighter. (This was the tip-off that all hell would break loose before they reached the Little Big Horn—someone, it seemed, had been selling brand new Winchesters to the Shoshones.) To come across the identical lines in a drama carved out of raw history was like witnessing the comeback performance of a superannuated shimmy-dancer. An experience which can be described as nostalgic, but disillusioning.

In a recent article in *The Screen Writer*, in which he examined several of the harder movie clichés, Roland Kibbee suggested that someone ought to catalogue the field. I am not foolhardy enough to attempt this task, but I should like to indicate a few avenues of inquiry to the future encyclopedist.

A special and continuing study will have to be made of those old standbys which periodically emerge into the Big Time.

One such threadbare formula has been resurrected in the current spate of pictures loosely labeled "psychological mysteries." Here we have the scene in which an expendable young starlet, stumbling across an important clue, unwittingly communicates her find to the murderer. "Have you told anyone else about this?" asks the gentleman, casually locking the door. "No," says the girl. The heavy starts walking slowly toward her. We go to a big head-closeup of the girl. Her eyes widen, as she asks: "Why are you looking at me like that?"

This is a good question.

Another good, if familiar, question is posed in the hard-bitten school of melodrama, where the cynical hero picks up a rain-soaked girl on the street and takes her to his apartment. The girl is generally Lizbeth Scott, who's tired of being pushed around. Sooner or later she will inquire: "Why are you, a stranger, doing this for me?"

Subsequently, when the hero elects to spend the night on the couch, I begin to wonder myself.

In the old spy dramas—where this scene originated—you could at least be sure of a rousing pay-off. At three in the morning the girl would stagger in from the other room with a dagger in her back, and fall dead across a convenient table. But not before she had whispered to our hero the closely guarded secret of the Book-of-the-Month Club selection for April.

## 2

IN his amusing and instructive essay, Mr. Kibbee mentioned the scene in which a couple of unappreciative townspeople scoff at Young Tom Edison. This brings up the fascinating topic of historical hindsight in pictures. The foregoing episode illustrates the negative approach, as opposed to the positive—or "Mark my words, there'll be war in Europe before 1915"—approach.

By paying close attention to dates in a period piece, you can predict just about every twist in the plot. If the subject is a British financial institution, facing bankruptcy during the Napoleonic Wars, it's a cinch that all will be saved by the fortuitous arrival of a pigeon bearing the news of Waterloo. While a scene portraying a plantation party in the Old South is bound to be interrupted by the announcement that Fort Sumter has just fired on Southern womanhood. And what do you suppose the small-town banker, on his way to work in the early Thirties, will discover outside his bank!

As you get closer to the present, beware of a radio playing unobtrusively in the background. If the setting



is a Mayfair drawing room, it's six-two-and-even that there will be a flash reporting Hitler's invasion of Poland. (This is the cue for the young couple to step out onto the balcony, and watch the searchlights combing the sky. After a while the young man will remark gravely: "Tonight the lights are going out all over Europe.") And if you find yourself in an American home, on a Sunday afternoon, with the kids reading the comics and dad listening to the symphony broadcast—well, you've seen it as often as I have.

Historical films, on the whole, are characterized by the most flagrant type of name-dropping. Sometimes it is intended to provide atmosphere; at other times the purpose is to make the audience feel smug, by letting it in on something the characters themselves don't realize.

For instance, during an Embassy Ball in Washington, a couple of dowagers will be spotlighted, gossiping about the guests.

"Who is that handsome young man dancing with the Senator's daughter?" one of them will ask.

"Oh—that's *Lieutenant Eisenhower*."

Similarly, if you are in pith-helmet country, the earnest young man scribbling by the camp-fire will be described as "some journalist chap—name of Kipling." While the eager young reporter in Virginia City will be brushed off with "he writes funny pieces for the paper—calls himself Mark Twain."

The same self-conscious air invests the scene in which an historic personage is brought into the world. The setting is generally a log cabin, and a doctor is bending over the mother's bed.

"It's a fine, healthy boy you have, Mrs. Arnold. Picked out a name for him yet?"

"We've decided to call him—Benedict."

Every so often there is a purely gratuitous scene, like the one in which a couple of extras pass each other on a London street, tip hats, and exchange greetings:

"Good morning, Gilbert."

"Good morning, Sullivan."

Then there is the type of name-dropping which capitalizes on the audience's prescience to achieve an ironic effect. Take the scene in which a weary Union regiment is slogging through a small Pennsylvania town, on its way to the front.

"What's the name of this hole, anyway?"

"I heard somebody say it was called—Gettysburg."

Another variation runs:

"You're tired, Mr. President. Why don't you stay home and rest?"

"No. It would disappoint too many people. I'm expected at Ford's Theater tonight."

When we get into the field of literary biography, there is the awkward problem of presenting the birth of the author's well-known works. The usual solution runs something like this:—

The moody young girl, in a night-gown and wrapper, slips into her sister's room. "I've finished my novel," she announces breathlessly.

"Wonderful!" says sis. "Have you got a title for it?"

"I'm thinking of calling it—*Wuthering Heights*."

(That this was an unfortunate choice is confirmed by Dr. Gallup. A posthumous survey reveals that the book could have achieved twice the audience penetration if the title had been changed to "*Drop Dead, My Love*.")

The genesis of a musical masterpiece is somewhat more fully portrayed. The inspiration is invariably supplied by a passing chimney-sweep, who is whistling a quartet of notes which everybody recognizes as the introduction to Tchaikowsky's First Piano Concerto—except Tchaikowsky. For the next seven reels, Peter Ilich is shown playing the same four notes over and over again. At this rate, it is obviously going to take him thirty years to finish the composition. But one afternoon, as he is sitting at the piano, sweating over his four notes, the camera moves in to a closeup of his hands on the keyboard. When the camera pulls back, the master is attired in evening clothes, and surrounded by a 99-piece symphony orchestra. In the interim, it seems, he has dashed off an additional twelve thousand notes, orchestrated the work, copied it, rehearsed the musicians, and had his dress-suit cleaned.

A distinguishing feature of the run-of-DeMille biographical epic is the character who makes Sweeping Statements about complex historical subjects. A good illustration is afforded by the scene in Cuba, where a group of Army doctors is being addressed by a Colonel of Engineers.

"Gentlemen, I can only say to you what I have already said to Washington—give us the answer to yellow fever, and we will give you the Panama Canal!"

This speech has a tendency to get twisted in my mind, emerging as: "Give us the answer to the Panama Canal, and we will give you the yellow fever!" That's what comes of being out too long in that hot tropical sun.

### 3

THE road to Cliche Heaven is strewn with props. The commonest and most versatile of these is the cigarette. It serves to endow the character with picturesque traits (he lights his cigarettes three at a time, or by striking a wooden match across the seat of his pants), and it provides an unfailing gambit for

the sultry heroine who never carries matches. While the manner in which a cigarette is stabbed out has at various times been used to express every emotion from impatience to nymphomania.

My favorite cigarette trick is the one which used to crop up frequently in gangster movies. This is the scene in which the mob gets together to confront a stool-pigeon in their midst. The room is oppressively silent, while the suspect fidgets uncomfortably in a corner. Finally the boss takes out a cigarette, asks the informer for a match. The latter lights one, with trembling fingers. The boss looks at him, narroweyed. "Whattsamatter—you nervous?" He steadies the culprit's hand. The stoolie glances around at the circle of hardened faces, lets the match burn down between his fingers. Then he starts to back away slowly. "Honest, boss, I didn't do it! I didn't do it, I tellya!" You know what happens to *him*.

Another prop, which is *de rigueur* for romantic scenes, is a man's large pocket handkerchief. This comes in very handy when the heroine bursts into tears (she always cries when she's happy).

"I know I'm being silly," she sniffles, "but I can't help it."

"Here," says the man, producing his handkerchief with a flourish. "Blow!"

And strangely enough—she does.

One character who is never happy without a prop is the kid who's too young to die. Early in the picture he must be shown fondling a snapshot of his sweetheart, a lock of his schnauzer's hair, or a high school medal for chinning. Then, when he stops the bullet with his name on it, the keepsake is either found clutched in his hand, or discovered by his buddies when they pack his effects for shipment back home.

Indispensable to the average whodunit is a grandfather clock—which generally turns in a better performance than the actors. It strikes thirteen just before someone is killed; stops running the moment its owner kicks off; and twenty years later, to the minute, starts up again—just as the will is being read. In a pinch, it also serves as a repository for bodies and other curiosa.

A special category should be reserved for those props which are used to express symbolism. Most familiar among them are the curtains which billow and the candle which goes out when somebody dies; the rag doll which tumbles over with its neck twisted when a character meets a violent end; and the rose which wilts when somebody suffers a fate worse than the Breen Office will allow.

Nor must we forget the listless canary, which suddenly bursts into song when its mistress—a cloistered princess, or poor little rich girl—finally falls in love.

This is the signal for the girl to open the cage, and give the canary its freedom. (As soon as the bird discovers that people on the outside don't feed it buttered zwieback for breakfast, it will come winging right back, of course. But that's another story.)

#### 4

A rewarding study for the cliché collector is the subject of screenplay construction—with special emphasis on openings, endings, and transitions between scenes.

The conventional movie opens with an "establishing shot," culled from the studio's film library. You see a series of quick flashes—Big Ben, London Bridge, the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, the British Museum, the Tower of London, Trafalgar Square, Hyde Park, and Picadilly Circus—and just to make sure you don't miss the point, a title informs you that you are in London.

In protest against this type of redundancy, I have always wanted to fade in on a stock shot of the New York skyline—superimpose on it the title *Chicago*—and underscore it with the song *San Francisco*. This would prove once and for all whether one picture is really worth a thousand words, and the relative effectiveness of aural and visual imagery.

Another frequent starter is the banner headline. There are various methods of presentation:—the string of newspapers coming off the press; the bundle of newspapers being dumped on a street corner by a delivery truck; and the newspaper which whirls at you from a distance, and socks you in the eye with some such startling revelation as "Tomorrow, Fair and Warmer."

The "must" opening for the picturization of a classic is a volume bound in hand-tooled leather, which unfolds to page one, while a voice intones the first paragraph. Subsequent gaps in the story are bridged simply by flipping through a few pages of the book.

Screenwriters are constantly seeking a fresh approach to the problem of transition between scenes. But innovations are quickly run into the ground, and yesterday's novelty becomes tomorrow's standard operational procedure. One such formula, which enjoyed quite a vogue a few years ago, had a character saying: "No! I will *not* go to Estelle Huckaboy's party!"—and the next time you saw him, where should he be but at Estelle Huckaboy's.

Recently there has been a growing tendency to match all dissolves—by overlapping similar objects or similar sounds. I don't particularly mind the transition from an evening gown on a rack to the same gown filled, from a spinning automobile tire to a



spinning roulette wheel, or from a whistling tea-kettle to a steamboat whistle. But when it becomes necessary for one character to squirt another in the face with a seltzer bottle, just to give the director a clever dissolve to Niagara Falls, that's going too far.

Dissolves which indicate a passage of time have, paradoxically enough, been little affected by the passage of time. Still with us are such tired devices as the moving clock hands, the ashtray which fills with cigarette butts, and the alternately snow-covered and blooming tree. Within my memory, only one advance has been made in the field—calendar leaves now drop off automatically, whereas in the old days a gentleman with a white beard and scythe used to slice them off.

In stories which take a character from childhood to manhood, the writer is confronted with the necessity of changing actors in mid-stream. This is usually accomplished by following the kid up to the day he gets his first pair of long pants. The camera then pans down his trouser-legs to his shoes, and when it pans up again—lo and behold, Jimmy Stewart! That's one of the advantages of living in a democracy—any competent youngster with a good agent can grow up to be Jimmy Stewart.

Movie endings admit of so few variations, that they are comparatively easy to classify.

There is the unabashedly romantic ending, where two characters walk off into the sunset, hand-in-hand (or ride off, flank-to-flank). Complementing it is the hope-for-the-future ending, in which a lone character goes off into the sunrise. (Get the symbolic difference?)

Closely allied with these is the celestial ending, where the camera leaves an earthbound scene and pans up to the sky. The sun's rays obligingly emerge from behind a cloud, and a swelling chorus of angel voices practically blasts you out of your seat.

Then there is the bitter-sweet ending, which uses "ghost" devices of one sort or another. Thus the young man who has just lost his understanding grandfather hears excerpts from the old man's philosophy on the soundtrack; while the boy who has undergone an experience which made a man of him, recalls (in double exposure) the carefree days of his youth when he used to romp barefoot through the woods. Similarly, the operetta heroine starts to reprise the sock ballad, and is joined in a duet by the ghost voice of her departed lover; and the aviator's widow hears the faint drone of his plane in the sky, and knows that he'll always be with her.

Pictures with an institutional background invariably resort to a ring-around-the-rosie ending. If the setting is a theatrical boarding house, the ingenue who has finally made the grade leaves just as another

young hopeful is arriving. And a story laid in a hospital will have one character expiring just as the wail of a new-born baby is heard down the corridor. Life, it seems, goes on.

Farce comedies have their stock fadeout, too. There is the final twist which causes the protagonist to clap his hand to his forehead, and exclaim: "This is the end!" Over which is superimposed: "The End."

When everything else fails, there is always the treadmill ending, which has a boy and girl running toward each other with outstretched arms, across a large expanse of beach or flooring. I keep waiting for the day when one of the sprinters will miss the other, and fall flat on his face; or when they'll meet, take a *good* look at each other, and decide to continue running. But I don't suppose the public is quite ready for it.

## 5

LAST year, Hollywood produced 425 feature-length pictures. Of these, 419 contained one or more of the following lines: (a) "What are *you* doing here?" (b) "Well, if *that's* the way you feel about it . . ." (c) "I can explain the whole thing."

These lines are significant not in themselves, but as an indication of the similarity of most movie plots.

For instance, how many of these boy-girl lines have you heard recently? "I love you because you're you." "They're playing our song." "I'm sure Roger would have wanted it this way." "That's what gives me the courage to go on." "With you I've known real happiness, Pam." "You're back— that's all that matters." "I know you don't want to talk about it." "The only decent thing I ever did in my life was to love you." "I've been blind." "I wanted everything to be beautiful for us." "He spoiled me for any other man." "I'm no good for you." "Oh, darling, hold me close—and never let me go." "Then this is—goodbye?"

Not to mention such other by-products of man-woman madness as: "Don't shut me out of your life." "But you're different." "From the first moment I saw you I knew we were meant for each other." "But why am I telling you all this?" "For *me*?" "This is so sudden." "I know you don't love me, but marry me now, and love will come later." "For the sake of the children." "You old fool—you didn't *really* think I loved you." "It's better this way." "Anything that happened before we were married, doesn't count." "I've been living a lie." "But you don't know anything about me." "Don't try to fight it." "How can you do this—after all we've been to each other?" and one of my all-time favorites, "Why you poor, mixed-up little thing—you're trembling."

Lack of space (Move over, Kibbee!) prevents me from going into other movie-subjects in similar detail. But every type of picture has produced its quota of trade-marked lines. To take a few examples at random:

*The Drama of Strong Passion.* "Yes, I killed him. And I'm glad, do you hear me, glad, *glad*, GLAD!"

*The Epic of Empire:* "Those drums! Those infernal drums! They're driving me mad, I tell you, mad, *mad*, MAD!" And as his superior officer slaps the kid in the face, he bites his lower lip and adds: "Sorry I broke!"

*The U. S. Cavalry Opus.* The white-faced telegrapher who announces: "I can't get through to Fort Blix, sir. The lines must be down." And the captain who grips the edge of the table and says: "That can mean only one thing—Geronimo!"

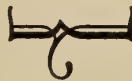
*The Private-Eye Melodrama.* "Another crack like that, and you'll be spittin' teeth." "Lay off—or you and me is gonna tangle, see?" "Bright Boy here talks like he's tired of living." And the tight-lipped final scene (lifted straight from the classic in the field) between the shamus and the girl who smells of night-blooming jasmine: "Sure, I'll have some bad nights after I've turned you in. But when a man's buddy is killed, he's gonna do something about it. And if they send you to the hot-seat—well, I'll always think of you."

To reverse the procedure—how many of these scenes do you recognize from their key lines? "Look at that grip! He's gonna grow up to be another Babe Ruth." "It's a symphony I'm writing—a symphony about the big city—the crowds—the subways . . ." "Johnson, if this is one of your gags, I'll see to it that you never work for another paper in this town." "He's just a big, overgrown kid." "They say to go beyond this point is dangerous. There's some silly native superstition about a white goddess who rules this part of the jungle." "Did he have any enemies?" "I'm comin' out, and I'm comin' out a-shootin'!" "It's bigger than you, bigger than me, bigger than all of us." "He's got a great fighting heart." "Who you getting your Kleenex from? Well, from now on you're taking six cases a week from me, see?" "He was just trying to shield me—that's why he refused to testify." "It means you'll never have a baby again." "He doesn't want to recover—he's lost the will to live."

If there's a point to all this, it's that movie dialogue will keep repeating itself as long as pictures are based on stock situations and peopled by stereotyped characters.

If only someone would write a story about a boss whose initials are *not* J.P., a fiance who is *not* a stuffed shirt, and a secretary who does *not* become a raving beauty by sweeping back her hair and discarding her horn-rimmed spectacles. . . .

Maybe I'll do it myself—as soon as I finish the one about the frontier marshal, the schoolmarm, and the dance-hall queen.



## A Cheerful Thought From a Screenwriter Long Unemployed

AN advantage to being a penniless lout  
Like myself and my friends in the same circumstance  
Is that we can lie down on a sofa without  
Any fear any coins will roll out of our pants.

— ANONYMOUS



# One Track Mind on a Two Way Ticket

GEORGE SEATON

*GEORGE SEATON is a member of the SWG Executive Board. He is the author of numerous screen plays, many of which he has also directed. This article is presented as an extended and carefully considered contribution to this magazine's recent symposium on the evolution of screen writers into what Joseph L. Mankiewicz described as "genuine film authors."*

ON APRIL 28th I received a telegram from the Editorial Board of *The Screen Writer* asking me to contribute a few hundred words to a symposium on how newer writers could become genuine film authors under present conditions.

On April 29th I set down, under several neatly numbered paragraphs, about four hundred words of counsel.

On April 30th I read it over and threw it in the waste basket. I realized that in giving advice one must necessarily run the risk of seeming patronizing, but I never knew how much brevity increased that risk. I hope that now, having been permitted to go into the subject a little more fully, I will not be found guilty of looking down from any lofty heights—for, although Mr. Mankiewicz placed me in some rather fast company and named me as one who has learned his trade thoroughly, I certainly do not consider myself, even after fifteen years, a genuine film author. I only hope that after another fifteen I might be able to sit through one of my pictures without wincing too many times. However, directing my own screen plays for the past four years has taught me a lot—not only about direction but more importantly about screenwriting. It is solely from a standpoint of experience, then, that I venture a few opinions.

As for Mr. Mankiewicz' critique—I liked it. I have always believed that far too many of us know far too little about the medium. But more than appreciating what it said, I like what it did. With the exception of the opening salvos on A.A.A., I have never seen an article in our magazine cause so healthy a contro-

versy. Seminars and symposiums were held under the sponsorship of the Guild; every studio commissary became a debating platform; and the traditional battlefield, Schwab's soda fountain, got its best workout. I was impressed by the sincerity of the comments and suggestions that poured in, for, although they both blasted and praised, they all had one thing in common—an honest desire to improve the lot of the writer in Hollywood.

This piece is written in the same spirit for screen writers who respect their craft. So if you are a novelist who is a little contemptuous of the medium, using Hollywood merely as a comfortable motel on your travels between one book and another, this piece will be of little interest. If you are a playwright who is here "to knock out a quick screenplay and pick up a few bucks" while your producer tries to find some picture name for your new show, you'll find glancing at a casting directory much more profitable. Or if you are one who looks upon motion pictures as nothing more than the bastard offspring of the theater and a 2A Brownie and considers a script just a hundred and twenty pages of "gimmicks," "twists," "formulas," "weenies," "heart," "routines," "boffs," "yaks," "toppers," "bleeders" and "chases"—please go home.

If, on the other hand, you agree as I do with Sheridan Gibney that "screenwriting is a new form of dramatic art," and are willing to give it the respect and effort that such a definition commands, then maybe what I have to suggest might be of value. Not that I recommend what follows as the only solution, nor do I claim that by heeding my advice you will become

a Dudley Nichols overnight. I merely state that it helped me and, all other things being equal, it might help you.

**T**O MY way of thinking there are two ways of acquiring that technical facility, that awareness of the medium, which help to make a competent writer a genuine film author. The first method is by the process of osmosis: a gradual absorption of knowledge from any number of sources—discussions with directors and competent producers, working with experienced collaborators, seeing countless pictures, studying bales of scripts, trial and error, etc. The second is by watching pictures being shot. Having tried the “osmosis” school for ten years, I heartily recommend the second method, not because those ten years were without activity and reward (as a matter of fact I think I received as many credits and as much employment as most), but because that period was without satisfaction. It was filled with insecurity and fear—fear, I imagine, that someone was going to discover what I knew all along—that I didn’t know what the hell I was doing.

I was able to hold my own in conferences and salt my conversation with phrases like “Mat shots,” “Dolly back,” “Zoom in” and “Traveling inserts,” but it didn’t help. I felt like one of those Benchley Americans in Paris. I knew just enough of the language to get around and impress other Americans but I felt that the French were laughing at me. I had picked up a few key words but I hadn’t bothered (or been given the opportunity) to learn those all-important irregular verbs. So, deciding to go back and cram, I took up residence on a set. Believe me, in three months I learned more than I had in the preceding ten years.

The first suggestion, then, is watch a picture being shot. If it happens to be one of your own scripts, so much the better—if not, any script will do provided you’ve studied it sufficiently. Now by watching shooting I don’t mean dropping in on the set for a few minutes on your way back from the commissary. I mean sitting behind the camera all day every day. (Okay—we might as well stop right here and settle the question of “How do I get on a set?”)

I know that some of the studios won’t allow you to observe production. But let’s be honest—why should they allow it? Why should they pay you while you learn something you were supposed to have known when you took the assignment in the first place? You shouldn’t expect it any more than you should be expected to pay a secretary while she takes a course in typing. The answer then, though simple to give and difficult to follow, is—go off salary. I have never heard of any studio that closed a set to a writer if the writer was willing to visit it without being paid for the privi-

lege. I realize that giving up six to twelve weeks of employment or the chance of it, is not without sacrifice—but I’m sure that before you learned the technique of writing a short story, a play or a novel, you went a lot longer without remuneration. And if we agree that screenwriting is a new dramatic art form, then achieving a greater knowledge of it becomes well worth the time, sacrifice and effort.

An author who chooses to write for motion pictures is very much like a general medical practitioner who decides to become a specialist. To accomplish it the doctor gives up his practice, takes a residency at a hospital, and studies his specialty for a couple of years. To a lesser degree the would-be screenwriter must study in the same way and the place to do it is on the set. Although there will be no salary coming in, the period of observation will not be without compensation. What you will learn will make you a better screenwriter and consequently place you in a position to demand more money.

**W**HAT will you learn on a set? The same things a playwright learns during an out-of-town try-out. No matter how beautiful the script sounded when you read it to your wife you’ll discover, by seeing it on its feet, that it has many shortcomings. The countless rehearsals and takes will magnify the little faults you thought unimportant. Scenes will be overlong and static. At first you’ll blame it on the actors, the director or anybody else who happens to be handy. But after a time, if you’re able to look at the whole thing objectively, you’ll have to admit that when you wrote the script you did not concern yourself with the possibilities of the camera. You depended too much on dialogue to score your points. You’ll discover you’re both showing and telling and consequently the scenes appear obvious and overwritten. Gradually you’ll begin to think in terms of the camera—you’ll visualize scenes not as framed by a proscenium arch or the margins of a printed page but as seen through the “finder”—that little black box that tells you exactly what you’re going to get on the screen. If your values are not in the finder you’re a dead duck and no amount of brilliantly written stage direction will help you. If you learn nothing else, your time will not be wasted because, all other things being equal, the ability to use the camera as a collaborator is the primary difference between a good screen craftsman and a bad one. But you *will* learn more—dozens of things which you never thought essential but which will prove invaluable when you tackle your next script.

After the picture is shot sit in with the film editor. Most of them whom I have met are only too anxious to answer questions and help in any way possible. Here



again you will be reminded of the importance of the camera. When you see all of the film put together you'll notice that many lines of dialogue—yes, even entire scenes—are unnecessary. When you wrote the script you fought for them—the story, you felt, would never get across without them. Even on the set you were against cutting too drastically. Now you find, with some expert use of a couple of close-ups and reactions, that a three-page scene can be told in a dozen lines and with no values lost. It might even be more subtle and have better tempo than when you first conceived it. A good cutter is as much an artist as you are—don't avoid him.

My only other suggestion is one which no one else has deemed important enough to mention. Maybe I'm overestimating its value but since it has been of tremendous help to me, here it is: while preparing a script consult one of the studio's art directors. He will show you how you can get the maximum of production with the minimum of construction and probably make your scenes photographically more interesting. Economy of construction, as well as economy of words, is a writer's problem and the art director will help you achieve it. I mention this for your self-protection. If you disregard the number and size of your sets you'll discover that the production will be cut down later anyway, and most likely without any consideration for the import of the scenes. Furthermore, by working closely with an art director you're not so apt to go to the preview and find your professor-hero living in a twelve room penthouse. If he's consulted at an early stage and sees what you're trying to achieve you'll get a much more realistic production. Lastly, you will know what your sets will look like and consequently will be able to devise pieces of business that will heighten and make for less static scenes.

**T**HERE will be many who will argue that the above suggestions are not sound, principally because they contend that a writer is a story-teller, no more, no less, and his mind should not be cluttered with a lot of technical mumbo-jumbo. They maintain that that is the director's province and we should keep out of it. I might agree if this business were run differently. If a writer and a director were assigned simultaneously and worked together, each contributing his particular talents in a collaborative effort, that would be one thing. But I was asked: "How can newer writers

become genuine film authors under present conditions"—and that is quite another. Aside from a few teams in the tradition of Capra-Riskin and Ruggles-Binyon, *present conditions* means that a writer finishes a script one week and a director starts shooting the next. More often than not the two never meet. Under such an arrangement it behooves the writer to become more than a story-teller. Because a hundred and twenty pages of story, no matter how beautifully told, is not a shooting script, and a director with budgets and schedules staring him in the face has no alternative but to make changes as he goes along. Since this method of operation has proved at least financially successful I have little hope that it will be altered. The change must come then in the writer's concept of screenwriting.

The phrase "present conditions" also implies another glaring fault. The studios cry for "fresh" writing talent, men and women with "new ideas." These walking panaceas are brought out from New York by the dozens. Most of them, quite honestly, admit they know nothing about writing for motion pictures. The answer is always the same: "Don't worry about that. What we want is your great feel for character and your sparkling dialogue." Somehow this "feel" and "sparkle" seldom face a camera because most of the time the scripts never turn out the way the producer dreamed they would. Could it be that the studios have been crying and searching for the wrong thing all the time? I think so. I think what they've really been praying for are genuine film authors. Men and women who not only feel and sparkle but who know the medium and are able to get it on the screen.

Although "present conditions" is a brick wall in many ways, it also offers an opportunity. Two studios have thrown open their stages to writers who want to learn. At 20th Century-Fox, Darryl F. Zanuck has promised that any writer who wishes to observe production may do so. The only conditions are that you do not expect remuneration and are not on an assignment at any other studio. You will not be herded from stage to stage like visitors. You may pick your director and, if agreeable with him, will be allowed to remain on his set for the entire production. Every effort will be made to help you achieve a greater understanding and knowledge of the medium. At R-K-O, Dore Schary makes the same offer. All you have to do is call the Guild office and arrangements will be made. Any takers?

# As I Remember Birdie

RICHARD G. HUBLER

RICHARD G. HUBLER, a member of The Screen Writer Editorial Committee, is the author of several books. His new novel, *The Quiet Kingdom*, will soon be published by Rinehart & Co.

AS I dipped my ostrich quill pen into the brown gall ink of an eighteenth century coffee-house at the corner of Hollywood and Vine to write my Book of the Month novel the other day, I happened to see some words emerge from the palimpsest manuscript I was using for a scratch pad. The words were these: "Russell Birdwell has retired." \*

Perhaps never in the history of mankind have so few words meant so little to so many but to me they were pregnant with the fruity odors of a whole era. It is true that few will care but to the discerning that sentence meant that motion picture advertising and publicity had at last passed its rococo peak. After you have reached the top, as Amy Lowell used to take the cigar out of her mouth to say, where can you go except down? In a world grown old and cold and dreary, Birdie—as I knew him—chose to take the honorable way out.

These days when six out of ten selected psychiatrists assure me that Rogetomania—the illusion of grandeur induced by tearing words out of thesauri—is on the wane and when more than eight exclamation points after words like *stupendous* and *terrific* and *insurpassable* are considered vulgar the thing is clear: the flamboyant, freebooting, feckless, cavalier days of publicity are over.

When a man shot five adjectives from the hip—he kept the hammer on an empty one for safety, as any student of that period will tell you—without looking; snapped "Smile, when you say that!" if he was called a press agent instead of a public relations counsellor; and got inflammation of the forefinger from inserting it into the lapel buttonhole of many a freelance writer—ah, those were the days indeed.

Among these swashbucklers of swill, Birdie—as I remember him—was supreme. In the Cave of Winds which was motion picture exploitation, a demesne

where the most brash would hesitate to enter, Birdie slew the dragon with his own chubby hands. It was he who drew to its state of ultimate perfection the two distinguishing policies of motion picture publicity today: to wit, the treasure hunt and the singleton detail.

The treasure hunt was simple. Its technique was simply to ask of the human race such questions as "Will Bridget Schrumpledonck be Scarlett O'Hara?" and wait for a reaction, like a doctor injecting insulin for shock treatment. The rest was routine—false clues, contests, red herrings, Cinderella stories, and so on.

But it was to a world confused with tensions, vexed with cross-currents and conflicting ideologies that Birdie gave the classic example of the second tenet, the exercise in dogged singlemindedness. Not even the most horrendous war in history could force Birdie from his motif. Now that his drum-beating has died down after six years, the substance of his work can be evaluated and classified. I must confess that it was while I was munching a Jane Russell Special—two poached eggs on toast—that I got to noting down my memories of Birdie and his work on the publicity phenomenon of our time.

UNDOUBTEDLY the finest bit of his obsessive boobery ever foisted upon the great American public in recent years was back in 1941, the publicity campaign conducted by Russell Birdwell around the bosom of Jane Russell in ballyhooing the Howard Hughes picture, *The Outlaw*. In saying this I am not unmindful of such stunts as the Westinghouse Time Capsule (in which solemn japery I, God forgive me, had a hand), the registered rest rooms of the Texas Company's filling stations, Jim Moran's sitting on an ostrich egg to build up *The Egg and I*, and the same fellow's reported deals with Eskimos over refrigerators and hunting needles in a haystack. Perhaps it was Moran who first painted advertisements on

\* Mr. Birdwell has recently emerged from his brief retirement.



barber-shop ceilings and put mirrors on the floor of a notorious lecher's bedroom, I don't know. But not even painting "Gilda" on the Bikini atom bomb—a device which failed because of its immense and rancid bad taste—gives me the thrill I get when I think of Birdie and his bust. I used to fancy myself a fairly clever fellow because I once made page three of the New York *World-Telegram*. I was then punting long ones for the International Casino and who the hell can say anything new about a nightclub? That item was the one that informed the readers that the nationality of a girl could be told by merely looking at her legs. Don't ask me the way it was done, not now, but I got a picture of twenty legs or ten half-girls in a row on that lovely page three.

Nevertheless after a fair investigation of all the black arts of publicity I must take the pewter mustache cup away from my ego and give it to Birdie. A cute little roll, in a number of ways, who liked to pay for full-page ads to give his opinions on world topics, Birdie could sell a sow's ear to Bergdorf Goodman for a silk purse. Not that thirty-seven and a half inches of glandular development is not a considerable item on which to base hot news releases. I shudder to think on what back pages the United Nations would be today if Birdie were still touting the Hughes production. Even the rolypoly maestro himself, who did at least a colossal job on *Gone With The Wind* and had everybody in the country looking under chairs for three years for Vivian Leigh, found that the Civil War was nothing, positively nothing, when it came to mammyferous precocity.

This is how it all came about for a handsome fee. Birdie started slow, merely giving Miss Russell a thousand-dollar bill and telling her to "go out and get some duds." This was a cunning feeler as to the kind of material he had to mold. He spat on his typewriter and waited. Miss Russell bought herself blind for three days, returned, and gave Birdie \$300 back. Evidently she was going to be a problem. Birdie blew the whistle.

Across the country the public prints came running. In their wake panted the most famous lads available for cash within reason. It was William Early Singer that Birdie first slapped on the back. Singer, a painter who had daubed the portraits of King Albert of Belgium, Archbishop Sinnott of Canada, and the Duke of Windsor, fitted on his helmet and dashed out onto the field. It was he who pronounced the original mouthful on Miss Russell's eyeful.

"The ideal exciting girl," he said excitedly, "because she is so tall. Not many short women are exciting," a statement that didn't do Singer any good with the Midget's Cap-a-Pie Protective Association. Birdie

tried to hush him up but Singer kept running off at the mouth. "Her lips," he babbled, evidently trying to give Birdie the most for his money, "are the most kissable in the world. Because they are beautifully molded, softly appealing, silently inviting and not too easily kissed." This master of anti-climax had obviously spent the best years of his life bussing his way around the world. But Singer's day was over. Birdie knew where he could get the same stuff wholesale.

Chaim Gross, whom Birdie described as one of the most famous of living sculptors, put in a plug for the real issue. Singer had beat all around the bush but Gross put his finger right on it. "She has the most perfect bust in the world," he said in level tones. "She is the ideal of young American womanhood." Birdie was getting down to cold turkey. He followed this coup of Gross with a hard-hitting release from his research staff of two drugstore cowboys. "Murder," said Birdie, in a fine sequitur, "glints from an angry woman's eye like electric sparks. Miss Russell has such eyes."

That covered the top half of the agenda. The best was yet to come. From New York, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia proclaimed "Cinderella Day" in honor of Miss Russell who rose from obscurity to be unknown. In the courts of Los Angeles, as her sub-21 contract came up for approval, the judge peered over his glasses, ordered her to remove her studio makeup and return looking like a decent woman." Miss Russell did so and returned to win approval not only of her contract but also of most of the nation's rotogravure sections. Her picture, on a traffic Safety First poster, was reported to have cut rather than increased traffic accidents by 30 per cent.

AT army camps, Miss Russell stabbed dummies with bayonets, tossed hand grenades and rode in a tight red sweater. A lovesick private named Albert Goertz began to knit another sweater for her, egged on by Birdie's insatiable camera cads.

The Navy selected Miss Russell as "the girl we would most like to have waiting for us in every port." The Air Corps flying cadets adopted her as their mascot and named a Stockton Field, Calif., squadron "Russell's Raiders." The Navy came back slugging with a recruiting slogan: JOIN THE NAVY AND MEET JANE RUSSELL! They also forwarded six silver loving cups to her. The Marines made no official gestures.

Prof. A. J. Haagen-Smit of the California Institute of Technology invented a perfume which he dedicated to Miss Russell's "tempestuous allure." He called it, surprise!, *The Outlaw*. The magazine *Life* and the Sigma Nu fraternity selected Miss Russell as "the most promising star of 1941." They were grievously

deceived. Miss Russell remained a film incognito for quite some while.

Pictures of Miss Russell, in every conceivable pose, swept the country. Birdie could not supply the demand. A survey taken by a trade paper during a random three-week period in 1941 showed 532 papers put out 4256 pages on Miss Russell and 448 Sunday papers published 2016 columns about her. Her picture appeared on the covers of eleven national magazines and she was awarded spreads of 196 pages in said magazines.

*Esquire* ran a double-page truck in color of Miss Russell. Circulation leaped 186,000 copies. *Spot*, with approximately 150,000 circulation, ran a picture of Miss Russell on the cover and jumped 200,000. It hopefully ran another picture of her the next month and duplicated the feat.

The Fawcett Publishing Company, with five magazines, ran a picture of Miss Russell on the cover of one publication or another every month. Even the staid *Ladies' Home Journal* came through with a full page of Russell in color.

Birdie, desperate for new poses, finally took his own sport coat off and put it around the acquiescent Miss Russell. Little else was visible beside her lovely torso. The picture appeared in 3000 newspapers and a majority of magazines in the spring of 1941. The expenses of Birdie's clipping bureau, at a nickel a clip, bulged above \$2500 a month. He canceled the service.

Deliciously frightened by his own success, Birdie Birdwell decided to gear down the torrent of publicity. He gave Miss Russell a staple line to pass on to newspapers: "I don't smoke, drink, swear, neck or use narcotics." She got a wire from Princeton: DEAR JANE OUR COUNTRY NEEDS WOMEN LIKE YOU SO DO WE. It invited her to a house party. Birdie turned it down.

As a special favor, James Montgomery Flagg was allowed to paint her portrait and he remarked she was "as swarthy as a pirate's daughter." He quizzed her about her sultry look. Under orders, she told him it was because she had been a "whiney, disagreeable child," a Birdie master-stroke because Miss Russell was really very amiable as a youngster.

Oddly enough, in spite of Birdie's build-down, the rush for the Russell publicity bandwagon continued.

*Harper's Bazaar* ran a photograph of her, titling it: *The Return of the Full Bosom. Life, Liberty, Look, Pic, American* stayed aboard with revealing shots of the Hughes discovery every so often. Sigma Phi Epsilon chose her Girl of the Year. The juveniles of Hotchkiss School and the military of Battery B, 250th Coast Artillery, alike fawned upon her bust.

Even her mother titillated interviewers by revealing that Jane, at the tender age of eight, used to constantly recite with great dramatic fervor, a poem:

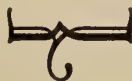
*"You are stiff and cold as a stone,  
Little cat;  
I often wonder how you ever got  
Like that."*

ALL right. I get off here. This is as far as I go with my memories. Maybe Miss Russell doesn't know how the cat got stiff and cold but I know how *I* got that way. I don't know how it all ended, all I know is that *The Outlaw* profits are being baled at a well-known mint in Philadelphia headed by a woman whose name is Nellie. Miss Russell, married to a professional football player named Waterfield, has not titillated the public much lately. This is of course because Hughes has flung off the gorgeous mantle of Birdie's publicity and put on the old, drab, dignified cloak of Carl Byoir's agency.

However, I have had my revenge. When my children gather round my gnarled old knees in the firelight and press me for a pre-war story, I shall pat them gently upon their tousled bur-filled little heads and look deep into the fire. If I just see combustion, the chances are I'll scream and squirt the extinguisher on it—but I don't anticipate that. What I expect to see will be the glorious roseate contours of ripe womanhood.

"Kids," I'll say dreamily. "Spread out. Slump up against that ottoman covered with the skin of a publicity fellow I used to know. Soft and white, isn't it? Let me tell you how I got it."

And I'll tell them, too, giving each a little Time Capsule to swallow afterwards so they can go to sleep and forget the horror of it all.





## Subject: Bindle Biog

F. HUGH HERBERT

*Writer-Director F. HUGH HERBERT is Secretary of the Screen Writers' Guild. He is the author of many screen and radio plays, and of such famous stage plays as Kiss and Tell, The Poseur, There You Are and Carry Me Upstairs.*

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: Herbert Keeler      DATE: February 5th, 1947  
TO: J. K. Hoffheimer      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

Dear J.K.

In view of the current terrific vogue for screen biographies (The Jolson Story, The Dolly Sisters and so forth), it occurs to me that we might be very smart to make a picture based on the life of Jonathan Bindle. The commercial tie-ups alone would be terrific. Let me know what you think.

HERBERT KEELER  
Scenario Editor

hk:mal

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer      DATE: February 6th, 1947  
TO: Herbert Keeler      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

Dear Herb:

Who the hell is Jonathan Bindle?

J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice President in  
charge of Production

jkh:by

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: Herbert Keeler      DATE: February 7th, 1947  
TO: J. K. Hoffheimer      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

Dear J.K.

I am really amazed that you have never heard of Jonathan Bindle. All the papers were full of him only a few days ago. He received during 1946 an income of \$4,596,289.14 according to the figures released by the U.S. Treasury Department. Bindle is President of General Candy Corporation and is rated the third richest man in the world. Eight years ago he was on relief. Today he is reported worth over \$500,000,000. A success story if there ever was one. I am convinced that the life of such a man would be an inspiring screen document which would appeal to every red-

blooded 100% American man, woman and child. And don't forget the commercial tie-ups.

HERBERT KEELER  
Scenario Editor

hk:mal

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer      DATE: February 7th, 1947  
TO: Herbert Keeler      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

Dear Herb:

I am deeply impressed by what you tell me. Find out if Mr. Bindle would co-operate with us. If he approves I would consider making his life one of our super-specials for 1948. Get me all the information you can.

J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice President in  
charge of Production

jkh:by

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L MCCARTHY  
IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY NY  
FEBRUARY 8 1947  
HOFFHEIMER OKAYS YOUR BINDLE BIOGRAPHY SUGGESTION  
STOP WOULD ADVISE YOUR CONTACTING BINDLE DIRECTLY  
STOP MAKE HIM REALIZE THAT THIS WOULD BE A SUPER  
SPECIAL POSSIBLY IN TECHNICOLOR STOP WORTH MILLIONS  
TO HIM IN PRESTIGE AND PUBLICITY STOP REGARDS  
KEELER

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center

New York City, New York

Mr. Jonathan Bindle, President  
General Candy Corporation  
Titanic Building, New York City

February 10th, 1947

Dear Sir:

The suggestion has been made by our Mr. J. K. Hoffheimer, one of the most brilliant motion picture producers in the industry, that a motion picture be made by our company based upon your life and spectacular success and achievements. We feel that we could undertake this production in a spirit of patriotic service

and national duty—make it, so to speak, a saga of rugged Americanism. It would be personally supervised by Mr. Hoffheimer.

If this suggestion appeals to you, I would be most happy to call upon you, at your convenience, to discuss all details.

Very truly yours  
ROGER L. McCARTHY  
Vice-President  
Imperial Pictures

rlm:ce

GENERAL CANDY CORPORATION

Titanic Building  
New York City, New York

February 12th, 1947

Mr. Roger L. McCarthy  
Vice-President Imperial Pictures  
Radio Center, New York City

Dear Sir:

In reply to your letter of February 10th, I am directed by Mr. Bindle to inform you that he has always been averse to personal publicity of any kind, and that consequently he could not entertain your suggestion for a moment.

I might add that, personally, I was very much in favor of it and urged Mr. Bindle to reconsider the matter, but he is, I regret to say, quite adamant.

Very truly yours,  
KATHLEEN SHANE  
Secretary to Mr. Bindle

ks

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
New York City, New York

February 14th, 1947

Miss Kathleen Shane  
Secretary to Mr. Jonathan Bindle  
General Candy Corporation  
My dear Miss Shane:

Thank you for your courteous note regarding our projected screen biography of Mr. Bindle.

In view of your own interest in the matter, I am not unhopeful that Mr. Bindle may yet reconsider his refusal. I have been in communication with our studios on the coast and they have tentatively budgeted the picture we plan to make at \$3,000,000. You might mention this to Mr. Bindle and point out that such tremendous publicity would be of incalculable benefit to all products of General Candy Corporation.

Very truly yours,  
ROGER L. McCARTHY  
Vice-President, Imperial Pictures

rlm:ce

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
New York City, New York

February 16th, 1947

Miss Kathleen Shane  
Secretary to Mr. Jonathan Bindle  
General Candy Corporation  
Titanic Building, New York City  
Dear Miss Shane:

I enjoyed our luncheon together so much, and I feel quite sure that, armed with all the additional facts

I presented, you will be able to overcome Mr. Bindle's objections. You have, if I may say so, a most engaging and persuasive personality.

I enclose a permanent pass to the Imperial Theater where all our pictures are shown, and if I can be of any further service to you whatsoever, please let me know.

Cordially,  
ROGER L. McCARTHY  
Vice-President, Imperial Pictures

rlm:ce

encl. 1 courtesy pass

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

HERBERT KEELER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

FEBRUARY 17 1947

TELL HOFFHEIMER BINDLE DEAL LOOKS FAIRLY HOT STOP HAVE NOT CONTACTED BINDLE PERSONALLY YET BUT AM IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH HIS SECRETARY STOP ARE YOU HAVING A SCRIPT PREPARED QUERY

R L McCARTHY

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L McCARTHY IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY

FEBRUARY 18 1947

PRACTICALLY NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE HERE REGARDING BINDLE STOP ALL WE CAN FIND ARE THREE LINES IN WHO'S WHO STOP NEWSPAPER MORGUES HAVE NO PICTURES OF BINDLE LATER THAN NINETEEN THIRTY NINE STOP SINCE NO SCRIPT CAN BE READIED UNTIL WE GET SOME FACTS PLEASE HAVE SOMEONE IN YOUR OFFICE PREPARE A DIGEST OF HIS LIFE WHERE HE WAS BORN EDUCATED SO FORTH ALSO GET US SOME RECENT PICTURES SO WE CAN CAST TENTATIVELY STOP REGARDS

KEELER

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
New York City, New York

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: R. L. McCarthy DATE: February 19th, 1947  
TO: Alfred Hines, Publicity Dept. SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

We contemplate making a super special for 1948 based on the life of Jonathan Bindle, President of General Candy Corporation. Drop everything else and get all available facts regarding Mr. Bindle. Please note that Mr. Bindle has not yet signed any agreement with us. He refuses to grant interviews and is averse to personal publicity so you will have to use all discretion and diplomacy in getting the information we want.

R. L. McCARTHY  
Vice-President

rlm:ce

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
New York City, New York

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: Alfred Hines DATE: February 22nd, 1947  
TO: R. L. McCarthy SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

I have spent three days digging up Bindle material but there is not much to be found.

He is fifty-three, bald and rather stout. Was born in Eggleston, Vermont, educated in public schools there. He is not married and has no relatives. Parents died when he was in school. Lives at Rosslyn, Long Island alone in a 28 room house with eleven servants. Never entertains. Attends Baptist Church. He refuses interviews and won't be photographed. Appears to be cordially disliked by most employees of General Candy Corp., likewise by his servants. Estimated wealth of half billion dollars is well authenticated. Does not drink or smoke. There has never been any romance



## THE SCREEN WRITER

or scandal in his life that I can discover, and I have spoken to half a dozen newspapermen who have covered him at various times.

ALFRED HINES

ah:mt

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L MCCARTHY IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY  
FEBRUARY 23 1947  
HAVE REGISTERED BINDLE IDEA WITH PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION CLAIMING PRIORITY STOP KEELER TELLS ME YOU WILL SOON HAVE BINDLE DEAL IN BAG STOP AM DICKERING WITH MGM FOR LOAN OF CLARK GABLE TO PLAY BINDLE STOP WHAT DO YOU THINK QUERY

J K HOFFHEIMER

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD  
GABLE NOT THE TYPE FOR BINDLE  
R L MCCARTHY

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

FEBRUARY 23 1947  
R L MCCARTHY IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY  
FEBRUARY 23 1947  
IF YOU CAN CLOSE BINDLE DEAL BY FRIDAY THINK I CAN ARRANGE WITH ZANUCK TO BORROW TYRONE POWER STOP MIGHT ALSO WORK OUT DEAL FOR LOAN OF HEDY LAMARR TO PLAY BINDLES WIFE STOP PLEASE REPLY  
J K HOFFHEIMER

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD  
FEBRUARY 25 1947  
BINDLE HAS NO WIFE STOP POWER NOT THE TYPE STOP PLEASE DO NOT RUSH ME BINDLE HAS NOT SIGNED YET STOP AM WORKING ON HIM FROM EVERY ANGLE STOP HAVE YOU GOT A STORY YET QUERY  
R L MCCARTHY

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

MISS KATHLEEN SHANE ANDERSON APTS TIMES SQUARE NEW YORK CITY  
FEBRUARY 25 1947  
DEAR KATHLEEN TRIED TO REACH YOU BY TELEPHONE THROUGHOUT THE AFTERNOON BUT YOU HAD ALREADY LEFT THE OFFICE STOP IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT I SEE BINDLE TOMORROW OR AT EARLIEST CONVENIENCE STOP TRY AND FIX THIS FOR ME THERES A DARLING

ROGER

### GENERAL CANDY CORPORATION

Titanic Building  
New York City, New York

February 26th, 1947

Mr. L. E. Buzzard, President  
Imperial Pictures Corporation  
Radio Center, New York City  
Dear Louie:

Some half-witted imbecile in your employ by the name of McCarthy is wasting my time, and that of my secretary, by writing and telephoning and telegraphing constantly regarding some fat-head scheme cooked up by one of your other morons to the effect that your company wants to make a screen biography of me.

Kindly tell him not to be a fool and suggest that he stop bothering me.

Sincerely,  
JONATHAN BINDLE

jb:ks

### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION  
FROM: L. E. Buzzard DATE: February 28th, 1947  
TO: R. L. McCarthy SUBJECT: Jonathan Bindle

Attached is a letter from Jonathan Bindle. What the hell is all this about?

L. E. BUZZARD  
Vice-President Imperial Pictures

leb:br

### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
New York City, New York  
INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION  
FROM: R. L. McCarthy DATE: February 28th, 1947  
TO: L. E. Buzzard SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

I suggested to Keeler who suggested to Hoffheimer that a motion picture based on the life of Jonathan Bindle would be a good idea. Biographs are clicking everywhere. They are the current trend. Since Ford is dead and Morgan unavailable Bindle seemed like a good bet to us. I'm delighted to see by his letter to you that you are personally acquainted. You must help us swing this.

We are the only major company who have not made an outstanding biography, and I think it is high time we went to bat. Bindle is rated worth more than \$500,000,000.00. If that's not a success story and good box-office, I'll eat my hat.

R. L. MCCARTHY  
Vice-President  
Imperial Pictures

rlm:ce

### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

Radio Center  
New York City, New York

March 1st, 1947

Mr. Jonathan Bindle, President  
General Candy Corporation  
Titanic Building, New York City  
Dear Jonathan:

Thanks for your letter which gave me a great kick. You always were a great kiddier, you know.

On the level, Jonathan, we are all very enthusiastic here about our Mr. McCarthy's suggestion of a screen biography of you, and I feel sure that it could be an outstanding epic of our modern age, a transcendental monument to American resource, industry and stick-to-itiveness.

Please give the matter your very serious consideration. I have just spoken by long distance telephone to Mr. Hoffheimer, our Vice-President In Charge of Production at the coast, and I have never known him to be so excited over any contemplated production. He has already increased the budget from two million to two and a half million dollars and has cabled George Bernard Shaw a tempting offer to write the screenplay.

I suggest we play golf and have lunch tomorrow to discuss the matter further.

L. E. BUZZARD  
President,  
Imperial Pictures Corp.

leb:br

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD  
MARCH 2 1947  
MCCARTHY AND I LUNCHEDED WITH BINDLE TODAY AND WENT INTO THE BIOGRAPHY MATTER STOP BINDLE WANTS HALF MILLION DOLLARS FOR RIGHTS TO HIS LIFE AND INSISTS EVERY DETAIL OF STORY AND PRODUCTION MUST HAVE HIS OKAY STOP OTHERWISE NO DICE STOP DO YOU FEEL THAT THE PUBLIC CAN BE MADE SUFFICIENTLY BINDLE CONSCIOUS TO JUSTIFY SUCH AN INVESTMENT QUERY  
L E BUZZARD

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY  
MARCH 3 1947  
FOLLOWING A PREVIEW LAST NIGHT I ATTENDED A PARTY AND SOUNDED OUT VARIOUS PEOPLE REGARDING BINDLE BIOGRAPHY STOP LOUELLA PARSONS AND OTHERS INCLUDING

SUBJECT: BINDLE BIOG.

TRADE PAPERS ALL AGREE IT HAS SMASH POTENTIALITIES  
STOP ADVISE CLOSING DEAL EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY  
J K HOFFHEIMER

From Louella Parsons' Column *Los Angeles Examiner*,  
March 4th, 1947

*... Saw Imperial's wizard producer, Jerry Hoff-  
heimer, at The Hullabaloo last night ... He told  
me that he planned a stupendous life of Johnson  
Birrell, and you all know who he is ... It should  
be a terrific success. ...*

From Hedda Hopper's Column, *Los Angeles Times*, March  
4th, 1947

*... Trust Jerry Hoffheimer to bring home the  
bacon. I understand he has an option on "The  
Life Of George Bingham" which he plans to  
make for Imperial as a super special. "The Life  
Of George Bingham," he tells me, is reported to  
have sold 50,000,000 copies in ten years. ...*

From *Daily Variety*, March 4th, 1947

#### IMPERIAL OPTIONS BINGO YARN

*It is rumored that Imperial Pictures will screen  
an epic based on the current vogue for Bingo.  
500,000,000 people play Bingo and constitute a  
ready made audience, according to Jerry Hoff-  
heimer, who will produce.*

From *The Hollywood Reporter's* Rambling Reporter Col-  
umn, March 4th, 1947

*... And now, girls, who do you think is the new  
heartbeat of dynamic young Jerry Hoffheimer of  
Imperial Pictures? Her name is Josephine  
Beadle, and she is closely related to General  
Candy, U. S. Army. At least that's what Jerry  
told me himself last night. He's going to star her  
in Imperial Pictures, too, so I gathered. ...*

#### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

MARCH 6 1947  
BINDLE PACT MAY BE INKED THIS WEEK STOP ONLY A FEW  
DETAILS REMAIN TO BE IRONED OUT STOP IN ORDER TO  
SWING DEAL IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO GIVE CONTRACT TO  
BINDLES SECRETARY KATHLEEN SHANE STOP HAVE HAD TESTS  
OF SHANE MADE HERE AND THEY ARE BEING AIRMAILED  
TO YOU STOP LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK  
R L MCCARTHY

#### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L MCCARTHY IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK  
CITY MARCH 8 1947  
HAVE SEEN TESTS OF SHANE STOP SHE IS A WOW STOP DO  
YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW WHAT I THINK QUERY  
J K HOFFHEIMER

#### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

#### INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer DATE: March 9th, 1947  
TO: A. T. Freulich, Legal Dept. SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

Please prepare immediately standard stock contract  
for seven years with options for Kathleen Shane as  
per attached correspondence. Air-mail these to R. L.  
McCarthy at Radio Center.

J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice-President  
In Charge Of Production

jkh-by

ANDERSON APARTMENTS

Times Square  
New York City, New York

March 11th, 1947

Mr. William Grady  
Constitution Club  
New York City  
Dear Bill:

After the deplorable scene you made last night in

the lobby, I feel that the only course open to me is to  
return your ring and to wish you good-bye and good  
luck.

Mr. McCarthy, whom you attacked in such a brutal  
and cowardly fashion and without provocation, hap-  
pens to be just a business acquaintance, not that this  
is any concern of yours.

Please do not attempt to see me again.

KATHLEEN

encl. 1 ring

#### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

MARCH 12 1947  
SIGNING OF BINDLE DEAL UNAVOIDABLY DELAYED SEVERAL  
DAYS STOP MCCARTHY IS HANDLING THIS MATTER BUT UN-  
FORTUNATELY INDISPOSED AT HOME PAINFULLY SWOLLEN  
JAW STOP MEANWHILE SUGGEST YOU START NATIONAL  
PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN STOP REGARDS  
L E BUZZARD

#### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

#### INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer DATE: March 12th, 1947  
TO: H. V. Cradall SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.  
Publicity Director

The Bindle deal will be set in a few days. I want  
you to give this Bindle Biography the works. It will  
be our aim to make a picture worthy of this tremendous  
subject; how a man, down and out only eight years  
ago, by sheer genius, sweat and honesty built up an  
industrial empire and made himself half a billion dol-  
lars. Go to town on this.

J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice-President  
In Charge of Production

jkh-by

#### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

#### INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: Herbert Keeler DATE: March 13th, 1947  
TO: H. V. Crandall SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

Dear J.K.

Bernard Shaw has not answered any of my cables  
or letters, and I think we may assume he is not inter-  
ested in scripting the Bindle Biog. This is a pity be-  
cause he did a fairly good job on Pygmalion. I have  
been considering Robert Sherwood and Ben Hecht,  
but I do not think they have quite the right approach  
for us.

Meanwhile until we can get a name writer I have  
assigned Phoebe Quillan and Bertram Parch to pre-  
pare a treatment. Quillan and Parch just finished the  
screenplay of a western for the B unit. We have al-  
ready exhausted all their lay-off period and no other  
producers have assignments for them, so we may as  
well use them on this until we get a big name.

HERBERT KEELER  
Scenario Editor

hk:mal

#### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

#### INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: Bertram Parch and DATE: March 17th, 1947  
Phoebe Quillan SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.  
TO: J. K. Hoffheimer

We have an angle on Bindle which we would like



## THE SCREEN WRITER

to discuss with you personally, if you can spare the time.

BERTRAM PARCH  
PHOEBE QUILLAN

### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer      DATE: March 17th, 1947  
TO: Bertram Parch and      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.  
Phoebe Quillan

Mr. Hoffheimer will be tied up for several days cutting "Love's Heritage." He has requested me to send your memo of even date to Mr. Keeler with whom, as you are aware, all story angles should first be discussed.

BLANCHE YATES  
Secretary to  
Mr. Hoffheimer

by

### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

#### INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: Herbert Keeler      DATE: March 18th, 1947  
TO: Bertram Parch and      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.  
Phoebe Quillan

Please be advised that as of today you are both relieved of the Bindle biog. assignment. You will report to Mr. Gipfel who will assign you to a serial.

It should not be necessary to point out to contract writers, who, presumably, know our methods that we frown upon attempts by writers to go directly to the Executive Producer with story angles, all of which should be handled through this office.

HERBERT KEELER  
Scenario Editor

hk:mal

From *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 20th, 1947

#### IMPERIAL BORROWS GRIPES TO SCRIPT BINDLE

*Gilbert Griepes, ace scrivener at Paramount, has been loaned to Imperial to screenplay the Bindle Biog. Reported he will collab with Herbert Keeler, Imperial's own Scenario Editor who, for this chore, deserts exec desk and dusts off his typewriter. Four contract writers at Imperial also reported assigned to get material for Bindle pic.*

From *Variety*, March 24th, 1947

#### SEEK EMIL LUDWIG FOR POLISH JOB ON BINDLE SCRIPT

*Although a number of writers are already working at Imperial on "The Life Of Jonathan Bindle," it is rumored that Jerry Hoffheimer, Executive Producer, would like to get Emil Ludwig, noted biog. expert, for a final brush-up on script, when ready.*

From *The Los Angeles Examiner*, Screen and Drama Page, March 27th, 1947

#### COMB STAR RANKS TO FILL BINDLE ROLE

*Exhaustive tests have started at Imperial to find a suitable actor to portray the romantic role of Jonathan Bindle in the sensational life story of the magnate which is expected to go before the cameras early in July. Twenty-three ranking luminaries have already been tested.*

From *The Los Angeles Times*, March 28th, 1947

#### BINDLE PACT WITH IMPERIAL RUMORED COLD

*Three major studios are attempting to beat Im-*

*perial to the gun with stories based on the fantastic life of Jonathan Bindle, billionaire candy tycoon. While Imperial executives claim to have signed Mr. Bindle and state that script is nearly completed, rumors are current that the negotiations have hit a snag and that he is considering better offers from other sources.*

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L MCCARTHY IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY  
MARCH 28 1947  
DELAY IN SIGNING BINDLE HOLDING UP ALL PRODUCTION STOP IF DEAL FALLS THROUGH NOW EFFECT WOULD BE DISASTROUS STOP VAST EXPLOITATION CAMPAIGN ALREADY IN FULL SWING STOP TWENTY MILLION SCHOOL CHILDREN AWAIT THIS PICTURE AS UNIQUE SAGA AMERICANISM STOP ESTIMATE BINDLE PICTURE WILL OUT GROSS THE JOLSON STORY BOTH AT BOX OFFICE AND IN ROMANTIC INTEREST STOP MUST HAVE BINDLE AT THE STUDIO BEFORE APRIL 6TH FOR CONFERENCES ON STORY CASTING COSTUMES SETS STOP WHATS HOLDING THINGS UP QUERY  
J K HOFFHEIMER

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD  
MARCH 29 1947  
SORRY ABOUT DELAY STOP ONLY RETURNED TO MY DESK THIS MORNING AFTER DISTRESSING SIEGE OF ILLNESS STOP BINDLE SIGNED CONTRACTS THIS AFTERNOON STOP HE WILL ARRIVE HOLLYWOOD WEDNESDAY EVENING STOP I WILL FOLLOW PERSONALLY AS SOON AS URGENT DENTAL WORK COMPLETED STOP REGARDS

R L MCCARTHY

### IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

(VIA AIR-MAIL)  
FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer      DATE: April 4th, 1947  
TO: All stars, executives,      SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.  
directors, writers

We are giving a mammoth banquet at the Biltmore on Tuesday, April 8th, in honor of Jonathan Bindle whose life story we are going to film. Please arrange to keep this date free. I expect all of you to be present.

J. K. HOFFHEIMER

From *Daily Variety*, April 9th, 1947

#### BILTMORE BANQUET FOR BINDLE A BUST

*Imperial stars, execs and big shots gathered last night at Biltmore Bowl to honor Jonathan Bindle. A good time was had by all—except the guest of honor who failed to show. Bindle reported to have been in conference with writers and director on biog. details and too busy to attend.*

### AMBASSADOR HOTEL

Los Angeles

April 12th, 1947

Mr. J. K. Hoffheimer

Imperial Studios

Hollywood, California

Dear Mr. Hoffheimer:

Mr. Bindle has read the five "story outlines" which you sent to us by special messenger and desires me to say that they are all completely unacceptable. He does not wish the slightest departure from the known facts of his life.

Personally I thought they were all very good, but Mr. Bindle is hard to please.

I will be very busy for a few more days breaking in a new secretary for Mr. Bindle, but my resignation will be effective as of next Monday, and thereafter

I will gladly co-operate with you, as you suggested in our interview which I enjoyed very much.

Thank you so much for the lovely flowers.

Cordially,  
KATHLEEN SHANE  
Secretary to Mr. Bindle

P.S. I am so thrilled with Hollywood. I know I am going to love it here.

K.S.

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

April 14th, 1947

Mr. Jonathan Bindle  
Ambassador Hotel  
Los Angeles, California

Dear Mr. Bindle:

Further to our telephone conversation just concluded, I can only assure you that I personally had nothing whatsoever to do with the resignation of your secretary, Miss Shane. The details of her contract were handled in New York City by our Mr. McCarthy, and I naturally assumed that you were acquainted with all the facts.

I deeply regret that you have been caused any annoyance and trust that this will in no way affect your feeling toward our studio.

I am sending you a new treatment which I feel sure is a tremendous improvement over those you have already rejected. Please let me have your opinion as soon as possible.

Sincerely,  
J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice-President  
In Charge of Production

jkh:by

AMBASSADOR HOTEL

Los Angeles

April 15th, 1947

Mr. J. K. Hoffheimer  
Imperial Studios  
Hollywood, California  
Dear Mr. Hoffheimer:

Mr. Bindle has read the mss. you sent him entitled "Bindle Story, Treatment by Gilbert Griepes, Herbert Keeler, Beatrice Carraway and Donald Wade." He has instructed me to say, specifically, that he has never read such revolting rubbish in his life.

Very truly yours,  
VICTORIA PURVIS  
Secretary to Mr. Bindle

vp

(VIA AIR-MAIL)

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

April 16th, 1947

R. L. McCarthy, Vice-President  
Imperial Pictures Corporation  
Radio Center, New York City  
Dear R. L.

As you will have judged from my various night letters during the past few days, I am not happy about the Bindle biog. I regret to say that I find Mr. Bindle definitely unco-operative. We have finally prepared a *splendid* treatment, one of the best I have ever okayed,

and he has rejected it completely, and, I might add, very rudely.

It was a beautiful story and even Miss Shane, Mr. Bindle's former secretary, who read it at my request, told me she thought it was superb. She seems to be a very nice girl, incidentally, and I plan to give her a bit in the picture, since we have her under contract anyway.

I hope you will be out here soon so that perhaps you can reason with Bindle.

Sincerely,  
J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice-President  
In Charge of Production

jkh:by

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer DATE April 16th, 1947  
TO: Herbert Keeler SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

I have just returned from a rather unsatisfactory conference with Mr. Bindle at the Ambassador.

I like this last treatment very much, but Bindle doesn't, and I'm afraid we will have to make a few little changes, which you will please note:

- (a) The wife and 4 children must come out. I have pointed out to Bindle that marriage and family are sound American institutions with which he should be proud to be identified, but he insists that he has never been married and has never had any children and refuses to be misrepresented in the picture. Perhaps they could be somebody else's wife and children. I hate to lose them. Confer with the writers on this.
- (b) The party sequence where Bindle rescues the child from the burning Christmas tree must come out. He says he never did it and anyway he hates children and never goes to parties.
- (c) The character of Clarice, the devoted secretary who loves Bindle with unselfish secret adoration and helps him achieve success must come out. He insists that nobody ever helped him to anything. Moreover, his former secretary just quit her job, and he is rather sore about this.
- (d) The really moving sequence where Bindle charts eighteen B-29s, over the protests of the State Department, in order to parachute candy to the starving refugee children in Europe must come out.
- (e) The opening sequences in which we show Bindle as a boy, with all that good comedy business for his parents, must come out. Bindle says his parents were never comic. His mother died when he was a baby and his father was a pain in the neck.

Please have these changes made as quickly as possible. Put more writers on it if necessary.

J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice-President  
In Charge of Production

jkh:by

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

APRIL 18 1947  
PLEASE ADVISE IMMEDIATELY WHEN YOU EXPECT TO START



## THE SCREEN WRITER

SHOOTING ON BINDLE STORY STOP HAVE SENT McCARTHY TO WASHINGTON TO CONFER WITH SENATOR POLKINGTON ON A MAGNIFICENT IDEA OF MINE STOP POLKINGTON VERY CLOSE TO THE ADMINISTRATION AND MAY BE ABLE TO ARRANGE THAT THE DATE YOU START SHOOTING BE PROCLAIMED THE BEGINNING OF IMPERIAL HYPHEN BINDLE WEEK STOP THIS I THINK IS BETTER THAN YOUR SUGGESTION TO GET CLARE LUCE TO REWRITE THE SCRIPT STOP I HAVE NOT EVEN TAKEN THIS MATTER UP BECAUSE I BELIEVE SHE IS PRETTY BUSY RIGHT NOW STOP REGARDS

L E BUZZARD

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY APRIL 19 1947  
IMPOSSIBLE GIVE EVEN APPROXIMATE STARTING DATE BINDLE PICTURE STOP SCRIPT BEING REWRITTEN STOP BINDLE NOT AT ALL HELPFUL STOP MEANWHILE I HAVE SHIFTED OUR PRODUCTION SCHEDULE AND JEEPERS CREEPERS HITS CAMERAS TOMORROW STOP GLORIA VARNEY NOT AVAILABLE FOR INGENUE LEAD THEREFORE AT TELEGRAPHED SUGGESTION FROM McCARTHY IN WASHINGTON HAVE PUT KATHLEEN SHANE IN HER PLACE STOP THIS GIRL HAS PLENTY ON THE BALL STOP REGARDS

J K HOFFHEIMER

### CONGRESS HOTEL

Washington, D. C.

April 20th, 1947

Mr. L. E. Buzzard, President  
Imperial Pictures Corporation  
Radio Center, New York City  
Dear L. E.

I'm afraid our idea of Imperial-Bindle Week is out. Polkington has done his best, but it is harder to set a National Week than it used to be.

I just spoke to Hoffheimer on long distance, and he seems very worried about the Bindle picture. He asked me to hop a plane to the coast, and I am leaving in a couple of hours.

Regards,  
R. L. McCARTHY

rlm:jg

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L McCARTHY IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD APRIL 26 1947  
YOU HAVE BEEN AT THE COAST FOR NEARLY A WEEK AND I HAVE NOT HEARD FROM YOU STOP IS ANYTHING WRONG QUERY HOW ABOUT THE PICTURE QUERY I AM WORRIED STOP REGARDS

L E BUZZARD

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY APRIL 26 1947  
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT STOP JEEPERS CREEPERS LOOKS TERRIFIC STOP MY DISCOVERY THE LITTLE SHANE GIRL A SENSATION STOP REGARDS

R L McCARTHY

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L McCARTHY IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD APRIL 27 1947  
NEVER MIND JEEPERS CREEPERS STOP HOW ABOUT THE BINDLE PICTURE QUERY WHERE IS HOFFHEIMER QUERY WHATS UP QUERY

L E BUZZARD

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY APRIL 28 1947  
HOFFHEIMER BINDLE DIRECTOR AND WRITERS IN SECLUSION PALM SPRINGS CANNOT BE REACHED BY PHONE STOP THEY ARE POLISHING UP BINDLE STORY STOP HAVE ORDERED INCREASED BUDGET JEEPERS CREEPERS STOP ALL DAILIES WITH LITTLE SHANE GIRL SENSATIONAL STOP REGARDS

R L McCARTHY

From *Daily Variety*, April 29th, 1947

### BUZZARD HERE ON BINDLE BIZ

L. E. Buzzard, Imperial's prexy, planed in today from N.Y. to confer with studio execs on Bindle biog. Reports have been current for some days that yarn has hit snag. After a stay of only

twelve hours Mr. Buzzard flew back to Manhattan. Before boarding the plane he issued the following statement: "Contrary to malicious rumors, preparations for the filmization of the *Life Of Jonathan Bindle* are now practically completed. This epochal film, with a cast of thousands, will be the greatest picture ever to be made at our great studios."

From Rambling Reporter Column *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 30th, 1947

... That cute red-head with R. L. McCarthy at the Coconut Grove last night is Kathleen Shane, former sec. to J. Bindle, whose biography Imperial will shortly screen. She's playing the ingenue lead in *Jeepers Creepers*, and they say R. L. McC. is on the set all the time. . . .

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD MAY 1 1947  
AM NEGOTIATING FOR SENSATIONAL EXPLOITATION NOVELTY IN TIMES SQUARE STOP IMMENSE AUDITORIUM WILL BE ERECTED BY US ADJACENT TO GENERAL CANDY BUILDING WHERE FREE SHOWING OF BINDLE BIOGRAPHY TO ALL SCHOOL CHILDREN WILL BE GIVEN SIX TIMES DAILY STOP AUDITORIUM WILL BE CONSTRUCTED OF LUMINOUS GLASS AND WILL BE KNOWN AS IMPERIAL HYPHEN BINDLE BUILDING OF BEAUTY STOP TRUST ALL STORY TROUBLES NOW IRONED OUT AND THAT PRODUCTION WILL START WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY STOP SHOW THIS TO McCARTHY STOP REGARDS

L E BUZZARD

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY MAY 3 1947  
NEW BINDLE SCRIPT FINISHED BUT BINDLE NOT HERE NOW FOR FINAL OKAY STOP HE FLEW TO NEW YORK LAST NIGHT ON URGENT BUSINESS BUT PROMISED TO RETURN AS SOON AS NEEDED STOP PLEASE NOTIFY HIM WE ARE NOW READY TO GO STOP NEW SCRIPT HAS TERRIFIC BOX OFFICE WALLOP STOP IT IS A LYRIC HYMN TO THE ROMANCE OF AMERICAN BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE STOP PREDICT WE HAVE IN BINDLE SOMETHING TO BACK EDISON LINCOLN PASTEUR ZOLA AND ALL FORMER BIOGRAPHIES RIGHT OFF THE MAP STOP YOUR IMPERIAL HYPHEN BINDLE BUILDING OF BEAUTY A SENSATIONAL IDEA STOP CONGRATULATIONS

J K HOFFHEIMER

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD MAY 5 1947  
CANNOT UNDERSTAND YOUR NIGHT LETTER RE BINDLES NEW YORK TRIP STOP HIS OFFICE HERE KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT IT STOP THEY BELIEVE HE IS STILL IN HOLLYWOOD STOP PLEASE INVESTIGATE IMMEDIATELY

L E BUZZARD

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK CITY MAY 5 1947  
CHECK AT GLENDALE AIRPORT REVEALS BINDLE FLEW TO SEATTLE NOT NEW YORK AM RATHER UNEASY STOP REGARDS

J K HOFFHEIMER

Associated Press Dispatch, May 5th, 1947

SEATTLE, Wash, May 6, 1947 (AP)—Jonathan Bindle, president of General Candy Corporation, blew out his brains in a hotel here today after flying to this city from Hollywood, Cal. Only five minutes after the shocking suicide F.B.I. men arrived in the lobby of the hotel with a warrant for the arrest of Bindle in connection with gigantic stock frauds attributed to the late magnate. Sensational developments are expected. Mr. Bindle's former secretary, Kathleen Shane, believed to be in Hollywood, is to be questioned by the authorities.

### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

R L McCARTHY IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD MAY 6 1947  
CAN YOU DO ANYTHING AT ALL THROUGH YOUR FRIEND POLKINGTON TO HAVE THIS AWFUL BINDLE SCANDAL SOFT PEDALLED QUERY WIRE IMMEDIATELY

L E BUZZARD

SUBJECT: BINDLE BIOG.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK  
CITY MAY 6 1947  
NO

R L MCCARTHY

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD MAY 7 1947  
AM DELUGED WITH TELEGRAMS FROM EXHIBITORS DEMANDING  
OUR STAND ON BINDLE PICTURE ALREADY SCHEDULED AND  
SOLD STOP WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST QUERY  
L E BUZZARD

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

L E BUZZARD IMPERIAL PICTURES RADIO CENTER NEW YORK  
CITY MAY 8 1947  
WE ARE GOING AHEAD WITH BINDLE PICTURE DESPITE UN-  
FORTUNATE DEVELOPMENTS STOP WILL START SHOOTING  
MONDAY STOP HAVE INCREASED BUDGET TO FOUR MILLION  
DOLLARS STOP PREDICT WILL BE GREATEST PICTURE OF ALL  
TIME STOP REGARDS

J K HOFFHEIMER

From the New York Daily Mirror, May 9, 1947  
HOLLYWOOD, Cal., May 9, (AP)—Kathleen  
Shane, lovely red-haired private secretary to the  
late Jonathan Bindle, was questioned for three  
hours today by officials of the Federal Bureau  
of Investigation. Miss Shane, now under contract  
to Imperial Pictures, was comforted throughout  
the trying ordeal by R. L. McCarthy, film execu-  
tive. Miss Shane, it was revealed, knew nothing  
of Bindle's vast peculations. (Pictures on pages  
1, 4, 5, 6, and 7.)

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

J K HOFFHEIMER IMPERIAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD MAY 10 1947  
YOU MUST BE INSANE STOP BINDLE NOW EXPOSED AS GREAT-  
EST CROOK UNHUNG STOP HOW CAN WE FILM HIS LIFE AND  
HOLD HIM UP AS EXAMPLE TO YOUNG AMERICA AS PER OUR  
PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN QUERY ALL PLANS FOR BINDLE PICTURE  
MUST BE SHELVED STOP ALSO REPLACE SHANE GIRL WITH  
BIG NAME STAR AND SHOOT THE WORKS ON JEEPERS CREEPERS  
STOP

L E BUZZARD

(VIA AIR-MAIL)

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

May 11, 1947

Mr. L. E. Buzzard, President  
Imperial Pictures Corporation  
Radio Center, New York City  
Dear L.E.

I wish you would stop worrying. Everything is  
under control. I spent the last three days and nights  
working with seven of our best writers, and the Bindle  
biog. is licked. It will be known now as "THE BIN-  
DLE SWINDLE," and will be the biggest expose  
of crooked business and graft that this industry has  
ever seen. It will be timely, terrific and tremendous.

Moreover, since Bindle is now dead and a proven

crook, he is in the public domain, and we are going  
to town on the story of his life. Miss Shane is giving  
us all the low-down.

Also I have called off "JEEPERS CREEPERS"  
and am going to use the dance footage already shot in  
that picture—the stuff with Shane—as a night club  
sequence in "THE BINDLE SWINDLE." I guar-  
antee it will be a wow.

We will give Shane a terrific build-up as "The Girl  
Who Knew Bindle Best." It will be terrific.

Regards,  
J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Vice-President  
In Charge of Production

jkh:by

From the Hollywood Reporter, June 26, 1947

"BINDLE SWINDLE" SMASH HIT

A preview audience stood on its feet and cheered  
for ten minutes last night at the first preview of  
Imperial's mighty new achievement "THE  
BINDLE SWINDLE."

Under the superb, unerring, guiding hand of  
that master showman, Jerry Hoffheimer, director  
Kemble, and a magnificent cast have made  
screen history. There emerges from the shambles  
of fraud and trickery a mighty sermon on Ameri-  
canism, a document that every man, woman and  
child should see and must see.

The film which is an authentic life of the late  
Bindle abounds in drama and human situations.  
Outstanding are the scenes of the rescue of a  
child from a burning Christmas tree and the  
breath-taking sequence with the eighteen B-29s.

And a new star emerges, too. Lovely Kathleen  
Shane (Mrs. R. L. McCarthy) gives to the role  
of loyal secretary (a part she played in real  
life) a touching beautiful sincerity. . . .

IMPERIAL PICTURES CORPORATION

West Coast Studios

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

FROM: J. K. Hoffheimer DATE: June 27th, 1947  
TO: All Concerned SUBJECT: Bindle Biog.

The World Premier of "THE BINDLE SWIN-  
DLE" will take place at the Carthay Circle on July  
9th. We want this to be the greatest premiere ever held  
in Hollywood. Tickets will be, for this night of nights  
alone, \$15.00 each, plus tax. A large block in being  
reserved for the studio personnel.

I expect every Imperial star, featured player, exec-  
utive, director and writer to attend this premiere.

J. K. HOFFHEIMER





# Evolution of the French Cinema in the U. S.

NOEL MEADOW

NOEL MEADOW is a New York magazine editor, film producer and exhibitor, and a previous contributor to The Screen Writer.

THE principal medium of cultural exchange between nations has always been the one in which the greatest numbers can participate. It is therefore to be expected that the most popular medium existing between France and the United States is the cinema.

American enthusiasm for the French film is now at a higher point than it has been in the eight years elapsed since *Harvest* took the fancy of filmgoers in 1939. In 1940 Marcel Pagnol's *The Baker's Wife* cut deeply into the American's deep reluctance to struggle with the French language or even English titles on French films, which he found most distracting.

Nevertheless, prejudice was slowly reduced, and to a large degree because of the success of other, non-French, foreign films. The war, although it cut off imports, marked the turning point in popular acceptance. All available French films were successfully revived.

Some 12,000,000 American men and women went into military service, and a large proportion of them passed through France at one time or another. Some were unquestionably beguiled by the charm and versatility of the French language, but there can be no doubt that an even greater number experienced a new and growing conviction that isolationism was futile and that the keynote of the immediate future must be a high degree of internationalism. That would require an intimate knowledge of people of other lands, and a prerequisite must be the comprehension of their languages. Being then in France, and aware of the international character of the French tongue, that was the place to start.

That they were able thus to acquire, in most instances, only the scantiest phrases, is not so important as the fact that they abandoned their resistance against learning anything. It was a hopeful sign. Some hundreds of thousands of those young men and women returned home to enter universities, under the government-sub-

sidized educational program known as the G.I. Bill of Rights. No statistics are yet available, but it may safely be assumed that French language study in universities has become a more popular subject than ever before.

Since the new approach in language study emphasizes the conversational method, attendance at French motion pictures has been very considerably broadened by these students.

Another factor has been those Americans who may not have been at war, but who also have become freshly aware of the importance of French, and are seeking through the French film to refresh the faded memory of their own earlier language study.

HOWEVER, when all are added together, they do not constitute a large proportion of the population. But the United States has some 140,000,000 inhabitants, and even five percent of the number is 7,000,000.

To accommodate the demand for non-English films, there has been, until a year or two ago, fewer than a dozen theatres in all of the United States devoted exclusively to them, and less than half of that number had been in New York City.

During the latter part of the war, they showed a large proportionate increase, but actually few in number, so that by the end of 1946 there were from 35 to 40 such theatres in the United States, most of them devoted to French films. A large share of them remained in New York, but many of the new ones appeared in California — and there, principally in Los Angeles and San Francisco. It is significant that they appeared — and continue to appear — only in the largest cities. Still, a number of other theatres show foreign films occasionally.

But since the beginning of 1947, there has been an upward surge in the number of theatres over the nation

that have changed policy to foreign-language films exclusively, with French predominating.

The prospect that these films will conquer America completely is, however, not very likely. The demand will remain in the largest cities, which contain the cosmopolitan groups of various shades.

**F**INAL proof that insularity in the American provincial areas is a highly resistant state of mind comes from theatre operators there. They refuse to give any thought to foreign-language films for a very practicable reason: Even British-made films, they report, are occasionally unpopular because of their audience's impatience with the British accent!

If the war has spurred interest in the French film, it is also the war that even now prevents their wider exhibition. While America is commonly believed to be a cornucopia capable of producing material things of all kinds in endless abundance, there are presently, of course, many outstanding exceptions. One of them is building materials, and it is such a mundane thing that is hampering the French film in America.

To understand the relationship of these two conditions, some slight explanation is necessary.

No film can be brought impressively to the attention of an American audience, it is commonly believed, unless it bears the imprimatur of a New York theatre.

Virtually no new theatres have been built in New York in the past decade, and every property suitable for French films has already been acquired. Some conversion has been necessary in many instances, and this has been accomplished only at high cost.

Even those properties that are suitably situated, and can be converted within bounds of economic reason, have apparently been exhausted.

In the meantime, French film importers have been busy. Most of them seem to have been under the impression that some special saint would take care of the premiere problem. Perhaps the saints had postwar problems of their own that diverted all their energies.

The result: From 50 to 60 French films now repose in storage vaults in New York, awaiting a suitable theatre for launching. It might take two years to introduce that number properly to American audiences — considering the present American capacity to absorb foreign films — but even that circumstance would presuppose that there would be no further imports within the two-year period, to permit the lists to be cleared.

However, the trade estimates that at least 50 more foreign films will be imported in 1947!

Some of the more enterprising distributors have come to realize that the theatre problem is an immovable

object against which they cannot send an irresistible force, and are seeking to circumvent it.

They have begun by making a major alteration in their first premise — that a premiere in a theatre directly within the Times Square theatrical area is a *sine qua non*.

Thus, one of the newer distributing companies, Vog Films, led the way by giving a first showing in America to *Resistance*, originally *Peleton d'Execution*, at the Irving Place Theatre, on 14th Street. The unorthodox occurrence seemed to have had small effect on the demand for the film out of town.

Then Vog did it again. They decided it was needless to postpone further the opening of their film, *Francis The First*, which stars Fernandel.

With experimental confidence in its merit, they decided that a good film really did not require the prestige of a New York first showing. They selected the best of the three foreign film houses in Washington, D. C., and arranged for the American premiere there. It still awaits a New York showing.

With that precedent, the American sponsors of *Clandestine* held its first American showing in a Boston theatre. But even before that, a film later to run successfully in New York, *Les Enfants Du Paradis* (Children of Paradise) had first been shown in Los Angeles.

The Broadway-premiere legend thus punctured, the Mage distributing office has, in a very recent move, taken over a theatre on Broadway, near 65th Street, well outside of the Times Square perimeter, renamed it Studio 65, in the London tradition, and with the premiere of *The Bellman* has launched a foreign film theatre that defies a time-honored legend of geography.

**I**T should be noted in passing that establishing a foreign film theatre presents more than the mere problem of acquiring an existing theatre and converting it to the desired use. The foreign film theatre, for sound and economic and psychological reasons, should be "intimate" — that is, seat from 300 to 400 persons. Some are unavoidably larger. But small theatres have never been easy to find ready-made anywhere because, to satisfy the demand for Hollywood films, they would be inadequate.

Thus, in the frantic scrambling for foreign film show-houses, there is indeed in evidence a tendency to develop properties that will be found to be much too small for economical operation.

Still, substantial capital investment, like love, seems to conquer all. Two major French film companies, Pathe and Gaumont, oppressed by the theatre scarcity



and unwilling to compromise by use of expedients, are about to begin construction of suitable theatres in an area technically outside the Times Square theatre belt, but considered very favorably situated because it is in New York's counterpart of the Champs Elysees. One theatre will go up on West 57th Street, opposite Carnegie Hall, the nation's most prominent concert hall; the other will be erected on Park Avenue, at 58th Street, near the juncture of New York's fashionable residential street and a high-quality business thoroughfare.

It might be pointed out that the average-sized "intimate" theatre is intended to accommodate the demand for average-quality films. A film of poor quality will "die" in a theatre of any size. But one received with unusual enthusiasm taxes the capacity of the "intimate" house.

Thus, we find that the Italian film, *Open City*, which was greeted with wide acclaim, has begun its second consecutive year without evidence of any depletion of patronage, while *The Well-Digger's Daughter*, French film written, directed and produced by Marcel Pagnol, has passed the seven-month mark at the present writing.

No consideration of French films in the United States can omit reference to the *entrepreneurs* of distribution.

Foremost among them is Siritzky International Pictures, which is in an enviable position of being Pagnol's exclusive American representative. The concern is planning to release a dozen new motion pictures. Among them are five or six of Pagnol's, which include the nine-hour trilogy, *Fanny*, *Cesar* and *Marius*. His *Nais* will be the first film shown at the new theatre the Siritzky firm will open on West 44th Street, in the Times Square area in September. Christened the Guild Cinema, the theatre will seat 450, and will be situated in the newly-acquired building of the New York Newspaper Guild.

The Siritzky organization owns more than three-score film theatres in France and is headed by Leon Siritzky, who is associated with his sons, Sam and Joseph. They are now developing a plan to produce their own films in Hollywood, using prominent French players. Thus, they hope to combine the technique and intangible qualities of the French film with the mechanical production excellence of Hollywood.

A relative newcomer to French film importing, but one that promises intensive activity in the future, is Distinguished Films, a new arm of the Brandt interests, which owns or operates some 130 theatres in New York, including a number in the Times Square area.

The organization has the facilities and capital that could permit it to become a leader in the field, and it intends to use these advantages to that end.

Its Apollo Theatre is, and for some time has been, probably the most successful foreign film theatre in New York City — and that would mean the nation, as well — from the standpoint of patronage. Film engagements there are not measured in months, but in weeks, because the theatre has a loyal clientele which cannot wait for months for a new film to appear. It is not an "intimate" house and accommodates large audiences.

The Apollo seldom continues a film for more than four weeks, as it recently did with *Les Miserables* and *Lucrezia Borgia*.

All French films must, of course, carry English subtitles for American presentation, and that appears a satisfactory arrangement for those who do not understand French. Those who do, simply ignore the titles.

IT is very unlikely that the technique of "dubbing" English dialogue into foreign-language films may prove as successful as the practice appears to have been abroad. The disparity thus created between the lip movements and the speech emanating from the soundtrack will doubtless prove too much an obstacle to the American sense of synchronization. One such film, dubbed with English dialogue, was recently shown experimentally to a small audience of film trade critics. They were utterly bewildered by it, but their displeasure could be attributed in large part to the fact that the job was an artless one. A thin, youthful voice appeared to come from the lips of an old man, and British accents were freely mixed with American, without regard to plausibility. In any event, it will be a long time before the experiment is repeated.

For the future, the situation will be considerably affected by the 16mm. film, which now promises a wide growth in popularity in the very immediate future. It appears to strike at the very economic basis of the entire business of film exhibiting because it offers economy in producing printed films, in exhibiting them by use of inexpensive projecting equipment and employment of operators who need very little skill, and in the equipping of theatres at greatly reduced cost.

Economically, too, an advantage in the French film's distribution appears to be its failure to lose appeal after a first showing. While even the best Hollywood films are highly perishable, living a moth's existence, the good Gallic film appears to be of much hardier stock. While the new foreign film always makes a somewhat broader appeal, a good one seems to have the rugged quality that permits its successful revival after a hiatus of four or five years.

On the whole, the future of the French film in America appears very bright.

# What Is a License of Literary Property?

MORRIS E. COHN

*MORRIS E. COHN, SWG counsel and a specialist in literary property law, here analyzes some phases of licensing.*

ONE of the most important things to understand about the economics of literary work is that it is the writer who creates, not only the story, but also all of the rights in it. The moment the story is on paper all rights in it come into being. The transaction by which the story is sold or leased does not create rights in the work; it takes them away.

The significance of this is that the question of "sale" or "license" is not one of the creation of new rights for anybody. These rights always exist. The question is who gets them. Once this is understood a great clarity illuminates the current argument. Accusations and counter-charges, whether they appear in state papers or in trade papers, whether dignified or scurrilous, sound or false, are merely manifestations of the desire to get the most out of the transaction. This is, if not always wholesome, at least honest. For the creator, the man who does the work, this is a good position to be put into. Since it is he who creates the rights, as well as the work, it is good morals as well as sound economics that he should determine which he wishes to part with and which to keep.

When a film is completed it is ordinarily not sold. It is rented to theatre owners for a specific purpose: exhibition at a designated time and place. When the purpose has been served the exhibitor has no further rights whatever so far as the film is concerned. Producing companies seem to have tolerated the practice of leasing with a minimum of complaint and have in recent years managed their overhead and fixed charges in spite of it.

So with a story. A license would merely give a right to use it for a limited time and for a specified purpose. When the time has run the licensee has no further rights so far as the story is concerned. On the other hand, if a story is sold, say, to a motion picture pro-

ducer, then as to all rights other than those necessary to the production and exhibition of the film the purchaser is a broker, a jobber in literary rights. This is to say that as to those rights he deals for profit in the labor of others. And in that light the question, — who shall have what out of a transaction involving a man's labor, — indicates its own answer.

A license then is a transaction the cloth of which is cut and trimmed to fit the particular use. All that is left over belongs to the author. But a sale gives away the bolt. To keep at least the thread of his story the author, in a license transaction, should consider the following:

- The nature of the use to be made of the work;
- The duration of the license;
- The place where it may be exercised;
- By whom, whether the immediate licensee or anyone whom he designates;
- Who shall have the copyright of it and of its derivatives;
- The rights during the license and especially afterward of the parties in the product derived from the use of the story;
- The compensation;
- The rights of the parties to other uses of the work for the duration of the license;
- Credits for authorship.

THERE is enough in the foregoing for a treatise. But since the transaction itself is lawyer's work, this piece will comment briefly on a few of the foregoing. We suppose a licensing of an original story for motion pictures.

*The use.* The story itself may be changed before



being put on film. Cast and personnel for production will be selected. Budget will be made up. And the releasing organization will be selected. The right to use may be made to depend on the author's approval, limited or absolute, of some one or more of these factors. In any event the licensee's right to use the author's name should not be given unconditionally. The licensee's right to change the story, which is commonly given, should be buffered by the writer's privilege to withdraw his name. The story may no longer be his. Though honor may be appeased by the jingle of the guinea, the hurt is easiest endured anonymously.

Use for motion pictures should carry with it, in addition to exhibition, rights necessary for exploitation, as the right to publish abridgements and condensations for advertising purposes. Competing uses of the work may be limited in order to give the licensee the full value of his license; and for this reason a license to produce a film is customarily an *exclusive* license, denying the right to others. Unless, however, the film is actually produced, this exclusivity may serve to shelve the work for the duration of the license. Exclusivity, unless properly conditioned, may be a death sentence. Again, it should be recognized that other uses, such as radio, television, and publication, are separate exploitations, and they should be treated as such.

A license does not ordinarily obligate the producer to exercise it. But compensation, author's credits, and the exploitation of the story through other media may depend on whether the film is made. A license should not leave this to construction by silence, but should say whether the licensee is obligated to make and distribute the film, and if not what the consequences are to be. Here again delay in production may be paid for in cash, but there is often a point at which compensation for delay becomes the price for silence.

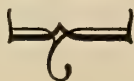
*Duration.* Because of the large sums involved the process of making a film is often by steps, with no commitments by the producing company until absolutely necessary. The company wants the right to quit at any point. Accordingly the duration of the license should depend on continued activity by the company. A system of options for extending the duration is frequently employed, and these can be made to depend not only on additional payments to the author but also on the progress which is being made on the film.

*By whom.* A transfer of rights under a license is often useful to a company which has independent operating units. But take care. If you are counting on a production by Great Pictures, Ltd., its right to transfer the license may defeat your expectation.

*Whose copyright.* The film is almost invariably copyrighted in the company's name. But the film cannot be shown after the license expires. It would be wasteful to shelve the film unconditionally on the expiration of the license. Options for the further showing of the film, upon specified division of the proceeds, may be made to commence on the expiration of the license. The film embodies many valuable rights other than story, and songs, music, and sets can be extracted for later use by the company. Sometimes it is difficult to sever these from the story of the film, and problems of ownership of the different rights can arise. For the security of the writer the copyright in the film can be transferred to him when the last right to exhibit has expired.

*Compensation.* Flat payments, percentages of proceeds, stock in the production company, extension by option payments, and all permutations and combinations of the foregoing are possible. Each transaction must be treated as an individual case, though the philosophy of royalties has a satisfying history. A percentage of the net leans toward joint proprietorship of the film. An interest in the gross has the appearance of a graduated labor cost because it takes the payment off the top, regardless of "profit," and it avoids some accounting complexities.

LICENSING will not descend on the motion picture or publishing industries like a rain of manna in answer to prayer. Until the advent of AAA or some other industry understanding, licensing will come in isolated transactions and then only by the efforts of informed and insistent authors. This brief comment seeks to help the process get started. Some of the provisions referred to would fit sales (transfer of rights to production, obligation to produce, compensation) as well as licensing transactions. The use of such provisions in any transactions extends beyond benefit to the immediate writer; it helps to cut a link in the chains of industry practices.



# The Writer's Share

## Some Comments on the Contribution of Writers to the Screen Industry, and Vice Versa

*In the August issue The Sreen Writer presented a special section under the heading: "1% OF THE GROSS—An Economic Primer of Screen Writing." In his article in this section Ring Lardner, Jr. wrote that the screen writers' present share of theatre admissions in the United States alone is one per cent, and he asked: "Does it seem preposterous to suggest that we actually provide as much as, say, two per cent of what the movie goer gets for his money?" The Editorial Committee asked several writers, producers, actors and directors to comment on this question. Following are a few representative replies:*

**SAMUEL GOLDWYN:**  
(Producer)

I AM glad to reply to your request for my comments on writers' compensation in relation to a percentage of film earnings.

Unfortunately, I do not have enough of the instincts of a book-keeper to be able to reply directly to your question. Furthermore, if I may say so, I think you are doing a very great disservice to a great field of art when you lump all Hollywood writers—the few capable ones and the many hacks—into one "average" and talk of them in terms of an indistinguishable mass. This is a glorification of mediocrity in a medium which calls for the highest degree of individuality.

There has been no individual in the motion picture industry who has espoused the cause of the writer more vigorously than I. I think so much of good writing that many years ago I even tried to institute the system of billing writers above stars. If that were feasible, I would do it today.

The fact is that nowhere else in America, in the world, do writers, no matter how successful or how able, earn a thousand, two thousand, five thousand dollars a week, without themselves taking any risk at all. It is true young and untried writers are not handed anything on a silver platter here. They must struggle for recognition the same as anyone else in our competitive system.

I feel deeply that too many writers who once had talent and who have

made fortunes in Hollywood spend more of their time today in a variety of other pursuits than they put in at a typewriter, even when they are working on pictures. Slickness has taken the place of genuine devotion to art and real pride in craftsmanship. I assure you that more great literature has been written in modest homes than in country clubs.

As a result it has become a lamentable fact that it is a virtual impossibility in Hollywood to assign a writer to a script and to get from him a work that can be put on the screen. Anguished cries have in the past gone up from writers that producers have called in additional writers to work on their scripts. For all the fact that producers may be equally at fault in this respect, I assure you that this is due largely to only one cause—the inferior quality of scripts as they are turned in. No producer likes to spend more money for writers if he has a good script to begin with.

Just look at the entire roster of pictures made here in the last twelve months, listen to the dialogue, read the script—and see if you can have any reason for pride in what your craft has produced. Please remember that I do not by any means want to ascribe all blame for that state of affairs to the writers, for I have nothing but equal blame for producers who put anything but the very finest work on the screen.

Certainly, what I have said is not meant to imply that there are no fine artists among our Hollywood writers. My point is that there are not enough

of them, and I believe that that condition is due in large measure to the writer's failure to discipline himself, his failure to look at his talent as a responsibility to be nurtured and developed, rather than as a means of enabling him to keep up with the Hollywood Joneses.

Hollywood is hungry for new and fresh material and Hollywood still pays the highest monetary reward in the world for creative writing.

But let's have more attention paid to fine ideas and vibrant words than to percentage figures.

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**JAMES HILTON**  
(Novelist and Screen Writer)

WITHOUT statistics of total industry personnel and an itemized breakdown of the movie dollar, the fact that only one cent of that dollar went to writers during the past year is impossible to judge either equitably or economically. But it looks bad and whether the one should have been two reveals a nauseatingly abject angle of discussion.

Perhaps, however, the salaries of scientists represented only a fraction of one per cent of the total atom bomb project cost, and the atom bomb was a horrible success. Is Hollywood that? Or is it just a success? And is it satisfied to be that and nothing else?

Personally I think Hollywood would be a bigger and certainly a better success if writers had more share in *production and responsibility*—as in England. That would make more sense—and probably also more cents.

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**STEPHEN LONGSTREET:**  
(Novelist and Screen Writer)

THE trouble with the writer in Hollywood is that he is always so damn modest. This talk of hiking one percent to two percent is nonsense. When a publisher like Bennett Cerf pats me on the head and tells me he can always afford to give me 15 percent of the take on one of my novels I want to dropkick him across the room (the only thing that stops me is that the old jokes may drop out of his pockets). I know damn well Sinclair Lewis gets twenty five percent of the take.

No author in his right mind would work for two percent no matter how hungry. Yet the screen writer in try-



ing to better himself is trembling when he asks for two percent of the take. Habit is really habit-forming. The writer having been brought into the film business by a group of men who didn't want him was tossed a little cash, and in thirty years the writer made an art talk, think and make sense. But his price never went up. The film studios expanded, grew bigger, grew into trusts, grew into huge and able dealers in stories on films. They took when the taking was good. They no longer wore caps, lived in tents or smoked dime cigars. They got the bigger cuts . . . but the writer? Well just remember that twenty-five years ago good title writers were getting three thousand dollars a week. But the average wage was about the same as today. Today a few . . . very few . . . top writers are getting three thousand dollars a week . . . the rest? The same average wage they were getting twenty-five years ago!

Broadway writers, working in a field that is not as gold plated as Hollywood would snicker at a take of two percent. I have just returned from New York where I am doing a play with George Abbott and Jerry Robbins. It is a musical which means that song writer, lyric writer and the book writer divide the take. We writers get seven and a half percent of the box office. Of the motion picture rights we get sixty percent.

How did we get all this? What throats did we cut? How much battle and howl did we have to put up? We didn't do anything. A producer on Broadway expects to pay that kind of percentage.

Of course, a bigger percentage helps the screen writer; I am talking of respect. The bigger the percentage the film writer gets on his product the bigger respect he will get from the studio. I came out here with the idea: the hell with the respect, give me the money. But after several conferences with people who thought all writers were returned under a stone at night, I came to the simple conclusion that only with respect for the writer would not only he but the whole industry amount to anything in the modern world.

**L**ET'S not kid ourselves; the studios are making the worst pictures in the whole history of the film busi-

ness. Times, events, turmoils and troubles are against us . . . we must admit that. We sit (and I invite in the whole industry . . . directors and cameramen and actors to sit in with us) we sit among ash in a time of flux and don't know where to turn. And to keep the wheels moving we go on grinding out what was good last year and the year before and the year before that. But the world is not crazy for our products, and across the sea the English and the French and the Italians and the Russians are making better pictures than we are. Not a lot of them, and they can't get much of an outlet here as yet. But they will. Crossing this nation this last month I stood around a lot and looked over the motion picture theatres. Nobody was fighting their way into the picture palaces. Nobody was panting to go in and see the same old grind of boy and girl and dance routine and the same close up of the same horse, and the same actress breathing through her nostrils. No, they were staying home by the radio, drinking beer, or watching television at the corner bar.

**M**Y advice to the studios is to bring the screen writer out of the cold. Invite him in to the fire. Set a good table for him above the salt, give him a cut of beef without too much bone in it, put a fatherly arm around the screen writer and say, "Well, fella, how about some great ideas for great motion pictures, some of those ideas we never let you get to first base with? We've been kind of heels to you writing guys . . . we admit it now. We see Red a lot because its a great little gag to keep you in line. Sure, we swipe your ideas and murder them . . . and we don't let you talk much with the director and the camera man and the set designer and the actor. That's all over, guy. You're one of us . . . hell, if it weren't for writers, we could be growing mushrooms in the stages. And just to show you we mean it . . . from now on we divide everything fair. Twenty-five percent to the studio . . . just to keep the stockholders happy, twenty-five percent to the actors, twenty-five percent to the directors and twenty-five percent to the writers. How does that sound to you?"

**I**T SOUNDS fine to me. I think I've earned it. I've injected story material into motion pictures where my share of what the film made was certainly more than twenty-five percent. I've created story for turkeys that couldn't get off the floor when the producer left them in my hands. I've had a studio turn over to me a problem actor, a problem property and I've made the damn thing work. I've made millions for the Hollywood film studios and been well paid for it . . . but now I want them to admit it. Not to me. To my fellow writers. And I want them to admit it where it will count. In that form we fill out for old Uncle Whiskers, in which we state proudly how much a part we are of the motion picture business, and how much we get for our work.

Remember, the studios will howl in pain just as much when you ask two percent as when you ask for twenty-five percent. Let's really exercise their throats. I love them all (some of my best friends are studios) and a little yelling will clear their heads.

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**IRVING PICHEL:**  
(Director)

**I** AGREE heartily with your suggestion that one percent of the proceeds of motion picture production is a small return to the writers who constitute the primary creative force of the motion picture industry. However, I am not sure that this statistic is a very instructive one, isolated from an examination of what happens to the other 99%. There are variables in the splitting up of theatre grosses which I am not mathematician enough to compute.

Some pictures play some houses on percentage, others on flat rentals. The percentages differ with seating capacity and location; so do the rentals. The proceeds from retail sales of pictures are as mysterious to me as the proceeds from the retail sale of women's clothes. In neither commodity does there seem to be a constant relationship between cost of production, retail yield and yield to the manufacturer.

Something more accurate might be derived from considering the proportion of picture costs that go to writers. At least, this is the point at which



controls can operate. If you include in your estimate of what writers receive, the sums paid for the plays or novels from which most pictures are adapted, something between ten and fifteen percent of production cost goes to writers, if my recent experience is typical. I have known of budgets in which story and screen play represented as high as twenty-seven percent of the budget.

This is a way of looking at things that seems instructive and, possibly, profitable.

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#### HOWARD LINDSAY:

(Actor and Playwright)

**I**T SEEMS to me that the heart of the screen writer-studio employer problem is not basically one of financial returns. It is the lack of respect the studios have for the writers and the corresponding lack of self-respect on the part of the writers.

I do not think the creative instinct flourishes best in a soil of weekly pay-checks.

There is no final solution to this relationship in so highly organized an industry, but I would prefer to have the screen writer accept a lower salary plus a royalty against the picture's gross after negative costs have been earned.

I believe a stake in the financial success of the picture would make for better writing. The studio would gain by lower story costs on less successful pictures. On the large grossing pictures they could afford to share the profit with the writer.

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#### DAVID O. SELZNICK:

(Producer)

**I**AM in receipt of your inquiry of August 6th concerning the percentage of the "all-time highest earnings of the film companies" allegedly received by the writers.

I feel that the comment concerning earnings came at an unfortunate time, when the situation in relation to the British tax has been threatening the entire industry, and may quickly turn expected earnings into very severe losses, both on pictures already completed, and on those which the studios are committed to complete.

However, this situation and its eventual outcome aside, I should like to point out that the contributions of writers to motion pictures are not sufficiently uniform, in relation to the pictures in their entirety, to warrant any arbitrary allocation of the share of the earnings as the proper share of the writers, either real or merely credited. This is even more true of the commercial aspects, on which the earnings, of course, depend.

A layman, unfamiliar with the business, would undoubtedly regard it as axiomatic that the principal creator of a motion picture is its writer. Yet we know that this is far from being uniformly true. We know that even the writing of a motion picture often is very largely traceable to the director, or the producer, or both. I am not saying that this is as it should be; I am merely stating it as a fact to be considered in relation to your inquiry.

Whatever the reasons for the contribution of the writer not being of more uniform and primary importance, not the least of these is the fact that so many alleged screenplay writers have not bothered to become masters of the medium, or even to learn much about it. Contrary to practicing playwrights of the so-called legitimate theatre, many men who are credited with the writing of a film understand all too little about the craft of getting a screenplay on to the screen—and therefore, most regrettably, too little about how to write a screenplay so that it can be staged. The consequence is that what should be the part of writing, and what is assumed in the credits, is the work of others than the writers; and this must be taken into consideration in weighing the worth of, and the comparative compensation for the *credited* writing.

Perhaps the opportunities for most writers to learn their craft have been limited; perhaps, where the opportunities have existed, advantage has not been taken of them. . . . The experienced writer of plays for the legitimate theatre understands the problems of stagecraft, which are few when compared to the diversified and multiple techniques, and to the varied mechanical and artistic talents, which go into the production of a motion picture. But since very few scenarists

understand either film cutting, for example, or how and when to move a camera, or even the basic fundamentals of the construction of individual scenes, the function of the writer must, in most cases, be supplied in large part by the producer and/or other members of the studio staffs.

Also, and importantly, since you are dealing in terms of economics and especially of earnings, I have known very few writers who have had the remotest conception of the most basic economics of the industry. Indeed, I have known very few writers who have considered even the cost factor in the preparation of a script. It might be argued that costs are not the problem of artistic creators; but when the question of earnings is brought into the picture surely costs are corollary. Since it now appears that the industry is about to face a crisis in costs, I for one would welcome a greater assumption of responsibility for costs by the writer.

**I**NCREASINGLY, production designers and film editors have had to supply what, in my opinion, should be functions of the writer, both in pre-production planning and in film editing, as a consequence of the lack of technique in the equipment of many screen writers. Properly, both the Academy and the Guild might collaborate with producers in establishing schools for men of undoubted writing talent who are unable to translate this talent, because of lack of experience and knowledge, into screenplay terms. I am not saying that writers should usurp what has become the function of other members of this business, notably the director (this is perhaps more properly the subject of another and separate debate), but I am saying that at least a basic understanding of the construction of a film play as a whole, and of its individual scenes, should be expected to be part of what a screenplay writer brings to his task; that today this understanding and knowledge is possessed by only a minority of those who offer themselves as screen writers; and that until this understanding and knowledge is more widespread among writers, it is not accurate to measure the contribution of screenplay writers in terms of the work with which they are credited, without reference to



## THE SCREEN WRITER

how little or how much they have actually contributed.

And quite apart from the limited contribution, in too many cases, of the writer to the scenarios (using this term in the sense that it used to be used in the days when writers could not lean to such an extent upon dialogue), it is no secret that the actual story and scene content of most screenplays, as photographed, is the result of collaboration between producer and/or director with the writer—and in many cases constitute the creative efforts of the director and/or the producer after the writer has finished. (In this business the day that a writer is “finished” means the day that he goes off the payroll. As of the date of the closing notice, or as of the date that the writer has moved to another assignment, the producer feels that the writer is no longer a part of the production. The writer, on his part, feels that he should not even be expected to think about the picture any further, because he is off payroll, or because he is being paid to do some other job. I believe that the cases where this is not true, on both sides, are few and far between. I must say that I think both producers and writers are at fault in this regard; and that sooner or later the writer will have a continuing concern with a picture until it is edited. But this too is the subject of another long debate.)

The story developments, the characterizations, the character of relationships, the construction of a piece as a whole and of the individual scenes (certainly from a cinematic viewpoint), the little “touches,” and all the other contributions to treatment which can and often do convert conventional writing into acceptable entertainment, as often as not stem from others than the man who is credited with the “writing” and who perhaps measures his compensation in terms of the writing as a whole, even though he is only responsible for some greater or lesser portion of the writing.

Certainly the “writing” of a finished motion picture is not merely what is on paper at the time the so-called screenplay is completed. I hasten to add, of course, I am aware that the extent of the contribution of the credited writer varies according to the writer, the director, the producer,

and even the studio; but I am merely making the point that—at least in my own rather extensive experience (and I, of course, am basing all my comments on my own experience only)—the cases have been rare in which a job that has been turned in as a “screenplay” has actually been a screenplay, and where the finished film result is constituted principally of the photographing and acting of what has been written by the writer, in the sense that a playwright’s work is staged and acted and produced.

Moreover, I might point out that the same screenplay, even when it is entirely the work of one man, varies in quality when produced, dependent upon who makes the picture and who is in it, to an extent that is far greater than is true in the theatre, the radio or any other medium (and I do not mean by this to discount the contributions of producers, directors, et cetera, in these other media, but merely to point out that the nature of our medium is such that there is opportunity for story telling with the camera that has not full parallel in these other media). It may well be that the complicated nature of the motion picture medium, including its involved mechanics, necessarily makes motion picture creation a collaboration to a greater extent than is necessary in other media.

But this aside, I believe that the individual motion picture writer of talent and of sincerity can only achieve what he is after when he has mastered his craft sufficiently to secure for himself backing as the director of his own work, or the producer, or both. When he has achieved this stature and this competence, his compensation, of course, enormously increases.

I assure you that producers are all too eager to find writers who have learned enough about the business to be able to achieve what the writers themselves desire in this connection. But it is manifestly untenable for writers who have never mastered the elementals of motion picture making to wish to perform these functions, or to have authority over them; and equally untenable for them to claim compensation in terms of contributions for which they are credited, but which credit in too many cases, to a varying

extent of course, goes far beyond the actual truth of their contributions.

**I** AM SURE that you do not wish any more lengthy essay on this subject than I have already written, but please permit me to point out also that the earnings on a picture are dependent, to an extraordinary extent, upon such factors as star values, showmanship, presentation, distribution, and the effectiveness of, and expenditures for, exploitation. To none of these does the writer contribute, of course. The willingness of the producer to gamble, his experience in and knowledge of these fields, his own creative showmanship, all play their part in the final result. Since your inquiry has to do with earnings, and not with artistic achievement, it is perhaps not inapropos to point out that the best writing does not necessarily mean the highest earnings.

There are so many other phases of this subject that it would require a lengthy dissertation indeed to go into all of them, but I should like to say in closing that it has always seemed amazing to me that writers in this business are unable to think until and unless they are on salary. Writers for other media, or at least a very large proportion of them, write at their own risk, and achieve income proportionate to their own success. A few writers in this business have had the initiative and the courage, as well as the confidence in their own talents, to write original screenplays without being on salary. Some of these have been sold for huge sums. When they are of outstanding quality and commercial appeal, they will continue to bring huge sums.

A producer is always ready to pay a great deal more for something approaching the finished product, which is submitted to him from outside his studio by reputable writers, thereby saving himself the agony of helping to get it written, as well as the gamble involved in paying for writers’ services. Every studio in town has had tremendous write-offs for scripts, which die aborning; and if the studios could be saved from these risks, and saved from these write-offs, or could even have the gamble minimized, it is obvious that they would gladly pay handsomely. But until that day comes,

writers who are on salary must remember that the investment in the script must be measured not only by their salaries, but also by the salaries of the producers and directors with whom they are collaborating, as well as by the huge overhead that rolls on awaiting the completion of the collaboration. Included in this overhead is the cost of the scripts which have never reached the screen.

Speaking as one producer, I can say that the money I have paid to writers represents a far greater percentage of the earnings of my films, in recent years, than has been arrived at by your statisticians; and second, that I would happily see the percentage go up if I could be saved both the time that is involved in collaborating on the screenplay, the huge cost of collaborating editors and producers and directors, and the risk that is involved in writers' salaries.

### MILLEN BRAND:

(Novelist and Screen Writer)

I'M FOR the proposal made in *The Screen Writer* for a two per cent levy on gross earnings of pictures. It's part of the whole royalty and licensing drive, and the fight in one place helps the fight everywhere. If it results, as it always does, in more control over material and medium for the screen writer, so much the better. It even ought to encourage original writing for the screen since it would put screen writers and other writers on a more equal basis (novelists, playwrights etc.).

As a novelist, I always felt good that I got a fair part of the earnings on a book. When a book of mine was made into a play, I continued to get royalties. Royalties only stop in the movies, where the most money is made. And yet the movies can't exist without stories.

A writer has to live while he writes.

This is allowed for in a general token way by the advance given a novelist on his royalties. If his book fails to earn enough to cover the royalties, there is no question of his paying the advance back. In the same way a movie writer is entitled to his salary plus royalties. And since he produces a very valuable product, his advance is in proportion.

What the screen writers ask for is fair and common business practice, and would tend immediately to better the quality of pictures. It would encourage a sense of writing integrity, it would tend to keep writing from being a patchwork affair. Writers would be in a position to think less in terms of job and more in terms of product. Producers, to some extent, would have to fall in line. This one advance would not solve every problem, but a start is better than nothing. If writers in other media and screen writers in other countries can get royalties, why not we?



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(August 21, 1947)

Columbia — Louella MacFarlane.

MGM — Anne Chapin; alternates, Sidney Boehm, Marvin Borowsky, Margaret Fitts, Charles Kaufman.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox — Richard Murphy.

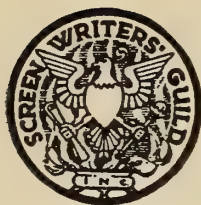
Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks.

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International — Silvia Richards.

RKO — Martin Rackin.





## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT: EMMET LAVERY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, MARY McCALL, JR.; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, HUGO BUTLER; SECRETARY, F. HUGH HERBERT; TREASURER, HAROLD BUCHMAN. EXECUTIVE BOARD: HAROLD BUCHMAN, HUGO BUTLER, JAMES M. CAIN, LESTER COLE, PHILIP DUNNE, F. HUGH HERBERT, TALBOT JENNINGS, GORDON KAHN, RING LARDNER, JR., MARY McCALL, JR., MAURICE RAPF, GEORGE SEATON, LEO TOWNSEND. ALTERNATES: VALENTINE DAVIES, DAVID HERTZ, RICHARD COLLINS, ART ARTHUR, JOHN LARKIN, EVERETT FREEMAN. COUNSEL, MORRIS E. COHN. ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALICE PENNEMAN.

## E D I T O R I A L

ON September 23rd, in Washington, the House Committee on Un-American Activities will open hearings on the much-publicized "Hollywood situation." This is the big show the Honorable J. Parnell Thomas and Company have been whipping into shape for the past several months. Starring in the production will be witnesses from Hollywood including, undoubtedly, members of the SWG. Breasts will be beaten, and sack cloth and ashes will be the predominant costume—if the show is staged in the entrepreneurs' accepted traditions. And, of course, there will be an excellent press.

What will the show be like? One need but recall its "summer" tryout here in our own precincts last June, when the preliminary hearing bore all the marks of a Shubert operetta. Witnesses were called, and they sang lustily, if not well. Remember the actor who was forced to appear in a "subversive" musical, while his soul cried out for the U. S. Naval Reserve? And the lady whose daughter refused to speak that now-memorable line, "Share and share alike, etc?"

True, most of the stars of that summer tryout were members of an organization which placed the Red label on such pictures as *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *Margie*. In view of this, it may be said that such people are irresponsible, and do not express the feelings of the adult section of our community. Yet when their kind of slander finds its way into print there are citizens throughout the nation who swallow it whole, slowly and solemnly, their worst fears about Hollywood confirmed. And some of them stop seeing pic-

tures, in mortal terror that they and their young might go to their graves with the taint of *Margie* upon them.

It is safe to assume that more slander and calumny will be heaped upon us when the hearings open in Washington this month. We must prepare ourselves for it, and we must fight it. Your Guild feels that the fight can best be carried forward by implementing the following resolution, which was submitted by the SWG Board and passed by the Membership at its meeting on August 14th:

*The House Committee on Un-American Activities has announced that its hearings concerning Hollywood will commence September 23. It is apparent from the statements of committee members, investigators and witnesses that the immediate target of these hearings will be the democratic guilds and unions of the picture industry. In the sub-committee hearings this spring, the Screen Writers' Guild was slanderously attacked as the center of subversive activity in Hollywood and afforded no opportunity to answer the charge. We are now sufficiently acquainted with the record and methods of this committee to know positively that there is no way to obtain a fair hearing under its auspices for our side of the case. For these reasons, and because every intelligent American knows that the eventual target of the committee is the freedom of the screen and American democratic rights in general, it is fitting that the Screen Writers Guild should issue the following call to the other employee and employer organizations in the industry:*

*"That the various guilds, unions and producer organizations in Hollywood unite in opposition to the conspiracy against the motion picture industry between a few individuals within the industry and the controlling faction of the House Committee on Un-American Activities; that these groups, representing the overwhelming majority sentiment of the industry, use every means at their disposal to expose in advance the nature and purpose of the so-called 'hearings' now scheduled for September 23; and that these groups combine their talents and existing channels for appealing to public opinion in order to present our side of the story to the American people during and after the committee sessions in Washington."*



IT had been plain for a long time that we could not continue indefinitely to extract hardening dollars out of the softening economies of England and other foreign nations. But when the British first announced restrictive financial measures against films imported from the U.S.A., the action was immediately utilized as a signal for drastic economy plans—for wholesale firings, cheapened budgets, increased reissues.

That's the kind of an economy wave that usually *follows* a depression. But the seeming mix-up in the signals may not be important. There's no reason why a really first-class job of cheapening our films should not *precede* a depression in the motion picture industry.

Both intrinsically and as a precedent for other soft currency nations, the British tax action was undoubtedly serious. No matter how it is compromised through negotiation, there will probably be a considerable temporary loss of the profit cream the Hollywood industry has been skimming from foreign markets. But the intimations of irretrievable disaster, the blusterings of Mr. Ungar and Mr. Wilkerson, the tremolo-stop pathos of Mr. Eric Johnston—



all these seem more than a little overdone in a \$1,130,000,000.00 a year industry that stands to have frozen or even to lose \$40,000,000 in the next year and a half as the result of the British move.

We do not minimize the importance of \$40,000,000. But we cannot overlook the fact that one Hollywood studio made a great deal more than that as net profit last year; that another studio recently reported a net of \$10,904,000.00 in 12 weeks; that the industry which rolled up a profit of \$316,000,000.00 in 1946 may not utterly collapse if it suffers the withholding or even the loss of \$40,000,000 between now and 1949.

Neither can we overlook the fact that the British action served as an excuse for dusting off that venerable gag about the domestic market barely paying negative costs and all profits coming from the foreign market. It is a little hard to believe that the most prosperous nation in history is unable to pay a profit on its most popular form of entertainment, and that \$316,000,000.00 in profits were wrested in one year out of the sick economies of Europe, Asia and Latin America.

In the war years, when our foreign film markets had all but vanished, why did the seven leading Hollywood studios show steadily increasing profits, if it is true that all the profit gravy comes from abroad? After all charges including income tax payments, why did these seven studios show net profits of \$34,487,016 in 1941, \$49,158,868 in 1942, \$59,622,188 in 1943, \$59,368,768 in 1944 and \$62,874,032 in 1945?

If all profits come from foreign markets and none from domestic markets, as the trade paper spokesmen of the producers say, why did *Daily Variety* say on Feb. 27, 1947: "Backlog of U. S. films in Europe and Orient is so tremendous that overseas audiences won't catch up for at least five years, according to sales and studio foreign toppers. Most of the pix in question have already been written off the cash books as domestic revenue showed huge profits during prosperous war years."?

As a part of and the primary creative force in the American motion picture industry, the Screen Writers' Guild wants the industry to prosper soundly and to grow intelligently. It cannot do this through any kind of self-deception. It cannot do this by failing to understand the hard facts of the world economic situation. It cannot do this through the blusterings and threats of its unofficial spokesmen. It cannot do this by blowing up a temporary hardship into a consummate disaster, and then trying to use the exaggeration as an excuse for mass firings, wholesale salary cuts and reversion to the 10 hour day and 60 hour week, as proposed. It cannot do this by cheapening the quality of the product when the hope of developing further the domestic and foreign market rests solely in making better pictures which more people will want to see.

Ours is an industry that is also an art. It is uniquely dependent on imponderables. It would be easy to wreck by a bull-in-the-china-shop "economy" drive. It would also be a pity to do it because of spiteful reaction to the threatened loss of a fraction of those profits.

# Report and Comment

## How One Movie Sale Was Made

By LILLIAN BOS ROSS

IN THIS script of how one movie sale was made, I am cast as Alice, the completely unknown writer of a first novel. Hollywood is Wonderland. I live far away, far from anything; in fact it is fifty miles from my home to the nearest small village. I have no telephone, no postoffice box, no road past my door. So I am Alice in Blunderland with the writer's usual empty cupboard and no stock of phials marked "Drink me," which would shrink me to a size where I might creep into Wonderland. All I can do is keep the weeds out of the potato patch and get on with the writing of another novel. I did just that, and my first novel, *The Stranger* sold to the movies!

The trail from Blunderland to Wonderland is a long, roundabout maze. Without knowing it, I was already on that trail when I worked and re-worked my novel until it was as good as I could make it. I had gained a few more miles every time I sent my manuscript out to completely unknown publishers. All I seemed to gain were laudatory and inedible letters ending in polite regrets. But those letters helped me to get a writer's agent. The agent got me a publisher. I had made the first, most tricky hurdle. I was now a writer with a published book.

Because my literary agent had connections with a Hollywood agent my book made the rounds of the studios. But this was during the time when most pictures were war pictures. So my regional romance was laid to rest on a shelf and went to sleep for over two years.

Far away on my isolated mountain I forgot Hollywood and went on with my work, published another novel. The war had ended by the time a visitor to the cabin suggested that a change of agents might create a new interest. I had no Hollywood contract, so the agent changing was a simple matter. This new agent expressed enthusiasm for my book and I found this not only pleasant but so exciting that I gave him the number of a Forest service telephone through which I could be reached. I forgot to tell him that this telephone is almost thirty miles from where I live and still the closest one by which I could be contacted. Such things are considered the simple fact, where I live; and anyway, it's quicker than a telegram, which usually takes three days by mail stage.

Months went by and again I forgot Hollywood. The winter garden was harvested, the spring garden grew tall and almost a year passed by. And then—it happened. One morning a tired Forest Ranger tied a weary horse to the gate post and came down the trail to the back door calling excitedly, "Lillian! Hollywood's trying to get hold of you!"

He gave me a slip of paper with a telephone number written on it. I felt my hands shaking a bit as I pushed wood into the old cookstove and got the ranger a good solid meal but I had no time for many emotional reactions. The ranger ate and started back over his many miles of forest trail. I made my way up to the highway, my next job being to reach the nearest highway telephone by the hitch-hike route. It was less than twenty miles away and I did it quite easily. Two days later the stage brought me enough paper in the form of contracts to make a sizeable mail-order catalogue and I had to get them notarized. The stage had already gone, since we were the end of the mail route. But with the aid of the endlessly-kind passing strangers I made the hundred-mile round trip in what was left of the day.

It was over. Alice in Blunderland had one foot in the opening door of Wonderland!

I STUMBLED in by a series of accidents, but now, looking backward, I find that even in my particular circumstances there are a few things of general application for every writer who looks toward Hollywood.

First, get published.

Second, get a Hollywood agent.

Third, cut out this next paragraph and paste it up beside your typewriter. When you read your first contract, check it for these points:

See that you are selling rights for

*One picture only*

*No re-issue*

*No re-makes*

If your characters are part of a series of novels, as mine are, see that you retain all rights to your characters except for this one picture. My contract covered all these things.

I had never seen the Screen Writers' Guild magazine, *The Screen Writer*, when my book was sold, and knew nothing of this. But I had a good agent. My sale was not of the spectacular variety; just run-of-the-mill, but he was in there pitching, getting the best deal he possibly could for me. Do not ask me his name for I could not give it to you; he is already one of the most overworked of men, with almost more clients than he can use, and a waiting list. But if you have in you the drive that keeps you, when no one seems to want what you write, working until you have that novel published, you also have the drive that will find you an agent when your need for one arrives. One last word. Don't try to write your novel for the movies. Write your novel your way. There can be new magic made that way for a formula-weary Wonderland.

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LILLIAN BOS ROSS, whose novel, *The Stranger*, has become one of the classics of modern American fiction, has written several subsequent novels. This is her first contribution to *The Screen Writer*.



## "No Evidence"

*Following is an editorial reprinted in part from the Westwood Hills Press of August 14 commenting on the CBS coast network debate of August 12 between SWG president Emmet Lavery and Jack B. Tenney, state senator and chairman of the state legislative committee on un-American activities:*

Although State Sen. Jack Tenney's California Committee on Un-American Activities spent some \$70,000 on investigations from 1939 through 1945 and has spent additional thousands since then, Senator Tenney, when pressed this week, was unable to quote one line of script or name one motion picture to substantiate his contention that communism in the movie industry is both a nuisance and a menace.

Mr. Lavery stated clearly that he was as opposed to communism as he was to fascism—but what about the specific question concerning the alleged dereliction of the film industry? Would the Senator please comment?

At six different points Mr. Lavery asked Senator Tenney if he would stop talking in general terms about communism versus democracy and give the radio audience chapter and verse on the films, the people, and the studios that today are supposedly purveying Communist propaganda.

Hounded this way, Senator Tenney admitted he had not seen the films *Margie* and *The Best Years of Our Lives* which Mr. Lavery said friends of the House Committee on Un-American Activities headed by Parnell Thomas have called subversive. The best the Senator could summon in reply was this:

"I don't believe that you would dare to sit here and tell me or the radio audience that you are of the opinion that certain people that you and I could mention would not write Communist propaganda into scripts if they had the opportunity (emphasis *italic*, ours) and the producers would let them get by with it!"

In reply, Mr. Lavery commented:

"What I say, Senator, is that *they have never had the chance* (emphasis in *italic*, ours again) and unless the

Hollywood scene changes very rapidly they never will have the chance."

Senator Tenney said that he agreed with Mr. Lavery, and from that point on any pretense of a debate on the subject at hand went by the board as far as the Senator was concerned.

*Next month The Screen Writer will publish an article dealing with the September 2 America's Town Meeting of the Air debate in which Emmet Lavery and Albert Dekker will uphold the negative and Hedda Hopper and Howard Emmett Rogers the affirmative of the question: "Is There Really a Threat of Communism in Hollywood?"*

*This program will be broadcast over the coast-to-coast ABC network and will be carried in the Los Angeles area over KECA. Time of the broadcast in all areas will be published in local newspaper radio schedules.*

If Senator Tenney can one day convince us that his single aim is to protect democracy, The Press will wish him well. In the meantime, The Press commends to him these words of Mr. Lavery:

"Let us prosecute sedition wherever and whenever we find it—but let's not liquidate the very ingredient which makes democracy what it is."

## More Comment on New Writing Blood

MR. DAVID MOSS wrote a mournful metaphor in the July issue, implying that the back alleys of Los Angeles were choked with young literary geniuses, ignored by the cruel world and in jeopardy of being scooped up and deposited in the municipal dump without options. He did not imply that those same alleys are full of frustrated actors, boy scout directors, insurance salesmen, used car dealers, sculptors, and putty workers.

Continuing the use of metaphor, it can be said that success is a redoubtable fortress afloat in society, con-

This comment is written by a screen writer who has a long experience in Hollywood and who asks that only his initials be used as a byline.

structed along the lines of Noah's ark and incapable of housing more than a small percentage of every species. The rest of us are rats and we're swimming from porthole to porthole, trying to get in. Some of us gnaw through the hull, some of us give up, a few drown—and practically everybody gets sore at the phenomenal rat who, without apparent capacity, sprouts wings and flies to the top deck for grilled cheese.

But metaphors are the height of simplification, so let's cut them out and get down to brass tacks. Who in this business of ours is expected to sit down for an hour every day and consider ways of smoothing the road for others? Who pays him for it? If he puts his chips on a dark horse that goes lame in the stretch who gets his option dropped? The guy who hired the unknown. Story editors are supposed to procure the best ghost stories and turn them over to qualified ghost story writers. They buy love stories and turn them over to writers who know how to make love. If through carelessness they get things switched, the virgin bears a goblin in the final sequence, the executive producer bears an axe in the front office, and the story writer goes out the back gate, bearing, say, a sense of fineness and self-appreciation for having gone down doing nice things for somebody else. It's good for the soul but hard on the stomach.

Let me tell you a very short and unimportant Cinderella story about a young writer. I got out of the army like nine-tenths of everybody else. I had a pulpy background, a couple of essays, a couple of features, and I put them all in a rucksack with oodles of ambition. For eight solid months I tried to get into a studio, struggled through front offices, my arms bulging with treatments, hot ideas, weenies jumping up and stabbing sadistic butchers, everything different—fresh and youngbloodish. I looked pathetic and therefore the brushoff was always polite, out a lower window.

Then one day I wrote a refreshing story about two fanatical German scientists who cunningly removed Hitler's brain and put it in the body of a handsome young nordic. I refused to disclose anything about surgical instruments or techniques in-



volved, and point blankly left a new Hitler in the Black Forest as the war ended. He was gazing fiendishly toward Baden-Baden and grizzlier horizons.

NOW that was imaginative, original, daring, bold, tempting, and I sold it to a publisher and took the acceptance slip out to a director I didn't know, who had gone to the same college, and he took me over to the studio where I met a bigtime producer, for whom Gladys Lotzaclass had just agreed to act, and they both rushed me into the front office where I shook hands with a man who missed my name, but who had just received a gigantic income tax refund, and all three of them took me into the absolute chief and he didn't even want to know my name. He said: "What the hell—it's either give it to the government or give it to him and," he added diagnostically, "we need new blood around here."

There. Now you have it. A major studio had contracted an unknown. All processes, mind you, without benefit of agent. And boy did the agents start pounding my door. "May I come in and give you a raise?" they kept yelling through my transom. "You're getting robbed!", they screamed. Some of them went outside the Writers' building and threw pebbles at my window pane, and when I'd look around they'd wink enticingly. I ignored them.

After six weeks of sitting in the office I got very used to the desk. One morning it dawned on me that perhaps I was expected to make the first move, so I called one of the men I had met that first day and stimulated a chain reaction. After two weeks of bickering a producer agreed to take me under his budget. "What do you do?" he asked. I told him the title of my story. "Not that, honey, not that—what do you *do*?"

"Oh, play golf," I ventured. "And sometimes cribbage."

He found out that I had been through public schools and that I had been in the service, so he immediately decided that I should write something about veterans returning to college. The more he paced the hotter it became. He picked up a phone and dialed upstairs and asked the chief what he thought about a deep, subjective, significant, one-word

titled veteran story and the chief thought it a grand idea, so the producer hung up on honey and sent me back to my cubicle for a molting period. Another youngblood across the hall was in the same henhouse so we exchanged glass eggs at option time.

Maybe you get the idea. My purpose is to point out that credit-line writers are always hired to do the something specific. They are not hired on general principles. They come along with their own original treatment, or they're assigned to adapt material the studio knows they can handle and material the studio intends to produce. Vague speculative assignments are bound to result from hiring someone simply because he is a writer.

As far as I was concerned, studio intentions were sincere, though undefined. Explore that young man. Feel him out. See what he can do. Go through the shelves and get that—get that hot manuscript on Sarah Bernhardt, the one O. Henry butchered! But hear ye, there never was a time when any producer felt called upon to entrust me with a property he personally desired to film. The studio was simply gambling that for the basic minimum it might have contracted Willie Shakespeare. Try as I did, I couldn't squeeze out *Hamlet*. Kindly indifference weighed heavily upon me. I got to crawling into a corner where I would pull an old tennis racquet cover over my head and go into the foetus crouch.

UNDERSTANDABLY, good properties went to established writers. Nobody at the studio was to blame for the year wasted on me, and I hope to hell it wasn't my writing. I did the damned story with these three veterans and those three veterans, and one producer would inject a murder in the medical lab, and the friendly director would change it to suicide, all in an atmosphere of genuine approval over the way I had picked up script writing. Once a producer called somebody else and said, "there might be a movie in this kid's stuff. Did you ever think about that?" The other person said, "No kidding? Well, if you run across an extra copy send it up some time." I got so excited I did a clean draft for the Johnston office.

The days grew short in September and were black by Christmas. Came January and little Willie went out in the great house-cleaning. Alarmed about box office, tax changes and fresh blood, executives hauled in Paul Bunyan to do the job. Countless young Thespians, in precisely my category, cried timber. The people who had hired me seemed startled, downright shocked, and insisted that I drop out and see them any old time. "We've all felt better with your blood in our veins."

After that, agents were not throwing pebbles. I had to write an entire novel before coaxing my name onto a list of clients. It was starting over, that's all. And for eight months my wife and I have been living on shredded rejection slips from publishers who advertise their search for young blood. That's just good public relations, Mr. Moss. Discount it. And be sure to get an agent who doesn't tell everybody you're a genius. When I show up in his wake, with my cropped hair and wistful young smile, producers darken and offer me parting peppermint.

There are youngbloods on their way through all the studios all the time. The best they ever get to handle is *Inside Alice* by Percy Veerence. That's the way it is and that's the way it oughta be. If you're convinced your ability merits a contract, then exercise the ability without waiting for the go sign from insiders, who are fighting to maintain their own position. For a young fellow everything's speculative until success. Then, quite strangely, consideration becomes retroactive and people want to see again your treatment about *The Dirty Urchin* and that dusty *Mrs. Moore*.

Studios are not to blame for their chilly regard of would-be's. Hell, it was cool when they went through. They simply reflect the ways of an economic system that thrives on initiative and has become inured to bitching.

S. R.

*The Executive Board, in resolutions of condolence at a recent meeting, voiced the regret of the entire Screen Writers' Guild for the passing of Walter De Leon and Thomas Job. Both were, until their last illness, active in the Guild and a credit to the screen writers' profession.*



## Correspondence

*The following letter has been received by the Editorial Committee from SWG member Mortimer Braus.*

*Unfortunately space prevents the printing of many similar messages concerning the August issue, which elicited from SWG members widespread approval and interest.*

I'd like to add my cheers for the whopping August issue of the *Screen Writer*, despite the Gloomy Gus note struck almost throughout. A grim situation requires a grim motif. Of course the time is coming when verbalization will not suffice; there must be an attempt to crystallize and get down to cases.

I found Gangelin's scalpel-sharp analysis the most enlightening; I must, however, take issue with Ring Lardner, Jr.'s piece, at least the title: *First Steps in Arithmetic*. To me it's a problem in higher Calculus, especially when the annual minimum wage suggestion is brought up as the pipe-dream panacea.

At any rate I found the issue irresistibly absorbing from cover to cover and I wanted you to know that. A top-bracket job of editorship and writing.

MORT BRAUS

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*Beatrice Meltzer Kahn of San Francisco, mother of Robert Meltzer, writes:*

Dear Guild Members,

Bob Meltzer's family was very much touched when the clippings came from Los Angeles and New York, telling of the great honor you are paying him.

And we, his family, mother, two brothers and three sisters must thank you.

We are rather removed from Bob's work; in the ten years before his death, we saw him very seldom. But being a large and hilarious family, our reunions were decidedly noisy and gay. And Bob, as you can guess, contributed greatly.

But we're so proud that the work

he did is to be honored by his colleagues, and that he's to be remembered in such a tangible way.

BEATRICE MELTZER KAHN

Mrs. Irving H. Kahn  
3364 Washington Street,  
San Francisco 18, California

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*The following letter has been received from Richard Coleman of Charleston, South Carolina:*

No one can be more interested than I am in fairness to the writer who sells his material to Hollywood. On January 13 this year a very elaborate affair was given by *Photoplay Magazine* for all those who contributed to the picture, *The Bells of St. Mary's*. Gold medals were given to all who had anything of importance to do with the picture, but there wasn't even a tin medal for me, the man who wrote the most praised and publicized part of the source material of that amazing box office hit. *Life* said that the part wherein Bergman as a nun teaches the boy to fight was the "notable asset of the picture," *Newsweek* said it was "the highlight of the film"; and other national magazines and important papers said the same thing. I have never received credit of any sort for my short story *Fight For Sister Joe* which was bought by RKO and resold to Rainbow Productions for the picture, although it was stated verbally that it was to be used in an unimportant picture and put to minor use. Because of that I received one thousand dollars for a story that was the basis of Bergman's biggest scene, and an integral part of the most important box office picture of all times.

My story had been told coast-to-coast four times by Nelson Olmsted on his *World's Greatest Short Stories* program; has been in magazines here and in England and in Ireland; had been in an anthology here and in England; had been called a little classic by reviewers of the anthology; and is used as a model of the short story in many Catholic secondary schools. So it had a history before

RKO bought it and had proved that it appealed to countless people everywhere. This valuable literary property was used to tremendous advantage but I was given almost nothing and no credit.

Worse than that, when the "boxing nun" became the talk of the movie-goers an item appeared in Louella Parsons' column stating, about McCarey, that his "aunt who was a nun taught him to box when he was a boy."

Surely I deserved credit for a story that became the trademark of *Bells of St. Mary's* and which brought inestimably valuable free publicity to the picture in the national press and through word of mouth.

When I asked for more money because of the good I had contributed to the picture and because I felt that I had been very unjustly treated in the matter of payment and credit, I got a very insulting letter.

It would be well if no literary property could be used in any picture, notwithstanding it had been previously bought and paid for, without the consent of the original author. In this way the author could demand and get a sum proportionate to the kind of picture in which the property is to be used. According to the present custom a price is fixed under circumstances which do not make for fair bargaining: the author does not know, and he is not told, to what use the property will be put, while on the other hand the purchaser has all of the information.

I am in the very unjust position of having contributed a very valuable part to the most valuable picture and no one in Hollywood knows my name or that I have other good things to sell. Leo McCarey got all the credit and the lion's share of the money. Is there no way that I can inform Hollywood that I am the man who created the boxing nun and that I have other creations with universal appeal?

RICHARD COLEMAN



# Letter From Paris

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)

executive secretary, M. Chavance, to go there again to-morrow evening, with a photographer, in order to prepare an article about their history and organization, for the *Screen Writer*.

They were so anxious to be helpful, and Jeanson and his colleagues were so hospitable and charming, that we hope the SWG has an opportunity to reciprocate in kind.

They are desirous of learning more about Hollywood and its ways, but the moment is inauspicious, since it is vacation time for almost every one.

Naturally, only generalities and amenities were expressed, but there were two definite points touched upon, which you may care to note for future reference.

The first is, that they are trying to establish a practice of limiting the number of writers whom a producer may engage for a given picture. They consider the present method degrading and undignified and believe that a producer should have enough judgment to pick the right people for the job in the first place. They asked me

whether we thought the SWG would join them in the effort. I told them that it was my personal opinion that it would be a very difficult project to present to Hollywood screen writers, since it would seem like limiting the number of obtainable jobs, especially at a time when they are hard to get, but that I might be wrong and would report the proposal to the SWG Board.

The second point was, more accurately, a question which they asked and which they seemed to consider more basic. They wanted to know, specifically, how much support we could count on from other guilds and unions in Hollywood, if and as we might need it; they referred especially to those unions that we know as "the back lots." I replied that this could not be answered specifically at the moment, at least not by any one of us, since we do not know the latest developments, but we would try to get some more definite information from you, in time for the September meeting. (So if there is any recent adoption of policy on this point, please advise us; likewise any developments, accomplished or pending.) They seem aware of the difficulties the Taft-Hartley Bill has made for us, particularly through its geographical limitation of our bargaining power and related to us an incident which they thought exemplified the advantage of local affiliations.

Recently a French producer attempted to cut a writer's salary, whereupon not only all the writers supported their colleague, but everybody, from the electricians to the cameramen and grips prepared to call a strike in his behalf, and the producer desisted. They could not seem to understand why we have not long since adopted such methods, which they evidently consider simple and natural.

Here are two other items, which we picked up in talking to other picture people around town. First, since the war, they think the U. S. films are deteriorating; that after tremendous advance publicity, they invariably prove disappointing and void of fresh ideas, and in many cases void of any ideas at all; that the French public is getting on to it, and the box office lines are diminishing. Second: In the Bastille Day Parade recently, the Film contingent carried a sign, reading: "THE BLUM-BYRNES AGREEMENT WILL KILL FRENCH PICTURES."

In a week or two, we expect to make a short visit to London and will let you know what happens there. It might make things easier for us if you notify the English writers that we'll be there.

Greetings to all.

SWG Liaison Committee,  
HENRY MYERS  
EDWARD ELISCU  
AL LEWIN

## Books: Films as a Reflection of Changing Social Patterns

A nation's motion pictures are more than a hit-or-miss accumulation of screen dramas, comedies, musicals, fantasies and documentaries. Over a period of time they are a social history of the people who make and see them. From them emerges a revealing pattern of changing mass attitudes, beliefs, values and customs. This is the underlying thesis of Dr. Siegfried Kracauer's important new book. (*From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Princeton. \$5.)

The period dealt with stretches from the time of the first World War to the coming to power of the Nazis in 1933. The evolution of German films and of the German film industry is traced with meticulous scholarship through these two decades. Pictures

are analyzed individually and in generic groups. There is much informed and invaluable discussion of the techniques of the great German directors. In a noteworthy appendix Dr. Kracauer considers at length the methods used by the Nazis in turning out propaganda films.

The importance of this book lies in the obviously vast research behind it and its emphasis of the fact that the films of any nation in any period are a new and extraordinarily vivid form of social history preserving for the future the manners, mores and wish dreams of the past. Also arresting is the analysis of the financial control structure of the German industry, and the part it played in the shaping of world tragedy.

R.S.

## A Check List of Books

*Getting a Job in Television*, by John Southwell. (McGraw-Hill. \$2).

*Television Primer of Production and Direction*, by Louis A. Sposa. (McGraw-Hill. \$3.50).

*An Introduction to Playwriting*, by Samuel Selden (Crofts. \$2).

*The Anatomy of Drama*, by Alan Reynolds. (University of California Press, \$3.75.).

*Orson Welles*, by Roy Alexander Fowler. (Pendulum Publications, London, 2 shillings).

*The Film in France*, by Roy Alexander Fowler. (Pendulum Publications, London, 2 shillings.)



# News Notes

★ Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture are: Three Film Pioneers: Ferdinand Zecca—*Whence Does He Come, Scenes of Convict Life, Slippery Jim, A Father's Honor, Fun After the Wedding*; Emile Cohl—*The Pumpkin Race, Une Dame Vraiment Bien, Joyeux Microbes, Le Peintre Neo-Impressioniste*; Jean Durand—*Onesime Horloger*. Sept. 1, 2, 3, 4.—George Melies: Magician and Film Pioneer—*The Conjuror, A Trip to the Moon, The Palace of the Arabian Nights, The Doctor's Secret, The Conquest of the Pole*. Sept. 5, 6, 7.—From Lumiere to Rene Clair: 1895 Films by Lumiere, *The Runaway Horse, Juve vs. Fantomas, The Crazy Ray*. Sept. 8, 9, 10, 11.—The Advance Guard (I): *The Smiling Madame Beudet, Ballet Mecanique, Entre acte, Menilmontant*. Sept. 12, 13, 14.—The Advance Guard (II): *Anaemic Cinema, Rien Que Les Heures, Emak Bakia, Etoile de Mer, Le Mysteres du Chateau du De*. Sept. 15, 16, 17, 18.—The Comedy Tradition (I): *The Italian Straw Hat*. Sept. 19, 20, 21.—Transition to Sound: *The Passion of Joan of Arc*. Sept. 22, 23, 24, 15.—The Comedy Tradition (II) *Joie de Vivre, A Nous la Liberte*. Sept. 26, 27, 28.—The Comedy Tradition (III): *Carnival in Flanders*. Sept. 29, 30, Oct. 1, 2.

★ SWG member Millen Brand had a short story in the August issue of *Woman's Day*.

★ Beth Bernice Cornelison and J. Harris Gable, a member of *The Screen Writer* Editorial Committee, were married July 23.

★ *Junior Jezebel*, a novel by SWG member Jan Fortune, was published in the August issue of *McCall's*.

★ SWG member Robert Spencer Carr has sold a novelette, *Morning Star*, to the *Saturday Evening Post*.

★ Norman Burnside, former SWG member and now a member of the Radio Writers' and Dramatists' Guilds, won a Bureau of Intercultural Relations Award prize with his story,

*A Cross for Jonothan*, originally published in *Story* magazine. Mr. Burnside also had a story in the August issue of *Readers Scope*.

★ SWG member Arthur Strawn had a story, *Foolish Old Man*, in a recent issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

★ Bob Dworkin's KNX program, *Meet the Author*, is now piped to 24 cities in western states via the CBS Pacific Network. The new time is 10:15 p.m. Sundays.

★ SWG members Dorothy Langley and Joseph Than have sold an unentitled novel to Prentice Hall.

★ *The Condemned*, SWG member Joseph Pagano's new novel, is scheduled for September publication by Prentice Hall.

★ SWG member Charles Hoffman's novelette, *I Didn't Know It was Loaded*, scheduled for early magazine publication in *Cosmopolitan*.

★ SWG member Joseph Shearing's novel, *So Evil, My Love*, is announced for Sept. 17 publication by *Harper's*.

★ SWG member Elizabeth Beecher had a radio play on the *Skippy* program Aug. 6. In collaboration with Arby Cannon she has sold a short story, *Headlines Ltd.*, to the *Canadian Home Journal*.

★ *Silver River*, SWG member Stephen Longstreet's screenplay, is being novelized by Mr. Longstreet for publication by Julian Messner in N. Y. and Clarence Winchester in London.

★ Herbert Marshall, editor of the *International Theatre and Cinema* and a member of the English Screen Writers' Association, is editing a series of books under the general heading of, "The International Library of Theatre and Cinema." He is interested in original books or treatises of a standard nature on any aspect of motion pictures for inclusion in the Library. His address is: The Studio, 10a Randolph Avenue, Maida Vale, London W9. He would appreciate

suggestions from SWG members and other workers in the Hollywood motion picture industry.

★ Leonid Snegoff, long identified with the stage and screen as an actor and director, announces the opening in Hollywood of the Theatre Laboratory for the testing of plays. He is interested in full length plays, and stipulates that writers who submit their plays will incur no obligation other than being available for consultation about production problems and being present when the plays are given a show-case reading before audiences of studio and theatre people. His address is 1954 Pinehurst, Hollywood 28. Telephone HEmpstead 8306.

★ SWG member Arthur E. Orloff has sold a radio adaptation of O. Henry's *The Ransom of Red Chief* to CBS.

★ The July (Summer) issue of the *Hollywood Quarterly* marks the end of the second year of the journal's publication with the usually mature and interesting screen, radio and television articles that have become the hallmark of the magazine. The leading article is by Vsevolod Pudovkin, the noted Russian director, who writes on the possibilities of the global film which will overcome language barriers and reach all peoples with a universal appeal. A supplementary article by Herman G. Weinberg, who has specialized in the adaptation and titling of foreign films, deals with the problems presented by these language difficulties. Arthur Rosenheimer, Jr., assistant curator of the Museum of Modern Art's film library, surveys the film periodical field in the U. S. A. and England. He describes *The Screen Writer* as "a lively and progressive publication . . . one of the few industry publications that lifts its eyes and its thinking beyond Hollywood." Other contributors of articles and reviews are Luciano Emmer and Enrico Gras, Joseph P. Brinton, III, Henry Dreyfuss, F. Dean McClusky, Charles Palmer, Roger Manvell, Eric Boden, Abraham Polonsky, Irving Pichel, Stuart Schulberg, Lester Ashcin, Jay E. Gordon, Syd Cassid,

Franklin Fearing, Philip Dunne, Lawrence Morton, Herman G. Weinberg and Gilbert Seldes. Editors of the Quarterly are now SWG members John Collier, James Hilton and Abraham Polonsky; Irving Pichel; and Samuel T. Farquhar, Franklin Fearing, Kenneth Macgowan and Franklin P. Rolfe of the University of California. Joan Macgowan is acting assistant editor.

\*SWG member Martin Field, who serves on the Editorial Committee of *The Screen Writer*, has just sold a short story to *Woman's Home Companion*. Title of story: *The Sale*.

\*Current attraction at the Coronet Theater, the third presentation of

Pelican Productions, is the Jean Paul Sartre play, "No Exit," with John Emery, Nancy Coleman and Tamara Geva in the starring roles.

Present plans call for the Las Palmas Theatre to be used not only for moveovers from the Coronet but as an originating point for plays which seem particularly well suited for the theatre. The Pelican group wishes to make plain that it considers neither the Coronet or Las Palmas stages its exclusive property but is anxious to make these available to any theatrical group which needs them.

The Hollywood Film Society continues to hold forth at the Coronet,

with an expanded program. In addition to the regular three showings on Monday nights of outstanding feature films, documentaries are shown on Thursdays and Fridays at 5:40 p.m.; children's programs at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Saturdays; and special showings of unusual film subjects, at 4:30 p.m., on Sundays.

\*The Rev. Thomas F. Coogan, director of the new Catholic Labor Institute of Los Angeles, invited interested SWG members to attend the first annual Labor Day Mass at St. Vibiana's Cathedral, Second and Main streets, Los Angeles, at 8:30 a. m., Monday, Sept. 1.

A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

JUNE 1, 1947 TO AUGUST 1, 1947

A

FRANKLYN ADREON

Joint Original Screenplay (with Basil Dickey, Jesse Duffy and Sol Shor) G-MEN NEVER FORGET, Rep

ZOE AKINS

Joint Screenplay (with Marguerite Roberts) AS YOU DESIRE ME, MGM

B

GRAHAM BAKER

Joint Screenplay (with Teddi Sherman) THEY PASSED THIS WAY, Enterprise

LEONARDO BERCOVICI

Joint Screenplay (with Robert E. Sherwood) THE BISHOP'S WIFE, Goldwyn

LILLIAN BERGQUIST

Sole Original Screenplay PIONEER JUSTICE, PRC

EDWARD BOCK

Sole Screenplay THE CRIME DOCTOR'S GAMBLE, Col

DEWITT BODEEN

Sole Screenplay I REMEMBER MAMA, RKO  
Sole Adaptation MEMORY OF LOVE, RKO

SYD BOEHM

Joint Screenplay (with Lester Cole) THE HIGH WALL, MGM

ALLEN BORETZ

Joint Story (with Don Hartman) IT HAD TO BE YOU, Col

WILLIAM BOWERS

Joint Screenplay (with Luci Ward and Jack Natteford) BLACK BART, HIGHWAYMAN, U. I.

FREDERICK HAZLETT BRENNAN

Sole Screenplay KILLER MCCOY, MGM

WILLIAM BRENT

Joint Adaptation (with Milard Brent) THEY PASSED THIS WAY, Enterprise

JAMESON BREWER

Joint Original Screenplay (with Arthur Dreifuss) SWEET GENEVIEVE, (Kay Pic.) Col  
Joint Screenplay (with Victor McLeod) TWO BLONDES AND A REDHEAD, (Kay Pic.) Col

GEORGE BRICKER

Sole Screenplay HEARTACHES, PRC

GEORGE BRUCE

Joint Screenplay Basis (with George Oppenheimer and Thomas Lennon) and Sole Story KILLER MCCOY, MGM

FRANK BUTLER

Joint Screenplay (with Karl Kamb) WHISPERING SMITH, Par

HUGO BUTLER

Joint Screenplay (with Geoffrey Homes) ROUGHSHOD, RKO

C

BORDEN CHASE

Sole Story and Joint Screenplay (with Charles Schnee) RED RIVER, Monterey Prod.

EDWARD CHODOROV

Joint Adaptation (with George Wells) THE HUCKSTERS, MGM

JEROME CHODOROV

Joint Screenplay (with Joseph Fields) TEXAS MANHUNT, Eagle-Lion

ROBERT CHURCHILL

Sole Screenplay LIGHTHOUSE, (Walter Colmes Prod.) PRC

LESTER COLE

Joint Screenplay (with Syd Boehm) THE HIGH WALL, MGM

MONTY F. COLLINS

Joint Story (with Julian Peyser) HEARTACHES, PRC

DOROTHY COOPER

Joint Screenplay (with Dorothy Kingsley, Charles Martin and Hans Wilhelm) ON AN ISLAND WITH YOU, MGM

DWIGHT CUMMINS

Joint Screenplay (with Dorothy Yost) THE STRAWBERRY ROAN, (Gene Autry Prod.) Col

NATHANIEL CURTIS

Sole Adaptation for the Screen THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE, Cagney Productions

D

LUTHER DAVIS

Sole Screenplay THE HUCKSTERS, MGM

I. A. L. DIAMOND

Joint Original Screenplay (with Phoebe and Henry Ephron) NEED FOR EACH OTHER, WB,

BASIL DICKEY

Joint Original Screenplay (with Franklyn Adreon, Jesse Duffy and Sol Shor) G-MEN NEVER FORGET, Rep

ARTHUR DREIFUSS

Joint Original Screenplay (with Jameson Brewer) SWEET GENEVIEVE, (Kay Pic.) Col

JESSE DUFFY

Joint Original Screenplay (with Basil Dickey, Franklyn Adreon, and Sol Shor) G-MEN NEVER FORGET, Rep

DECLA DUNNING

\*Contributor to Screenplay SLEEP, MY LOVE, Triangle Productions.

E

SAUL ELKINS

Sole Screenplay THE POWER BEHIND THE NATION (S) WB

CYRIL ENDFIELD

\*Contributor to Screenplay SLEEP, MY LOVE, Triangle Productions

HENRY EPHRON

Joint Screenplay (with Phoebe Ephron and I. A. L. Diamond) NEED FOR EACH OTHER, WB

\*Academy Bulletin Only



# THE SCREEN WRITER

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Joint Screenplay (with Henry Ephron and I. A. L. Diamond) NEED FOR EACH OTHER WB

## F

### FRANK FENTON

Joint Screenplay (with Dick Irving Hyland) MEMORY OF LOVE, RKO

### JOSEPH FIELDS

Joint Screenplay (with Jerome Chodorov) Texas Manhunt, Eagle-Lion

### BRADBURY FOOTE

Joint Story and Play Basis (with Alan R. Clark) THE HIGH WALL, MGM

### HARRIET FRANK, JR.

Joint Screenplay (with Stephen Longstreet) SILVER RIVER, WB

### MELVIN FRANK

Joint Screenplay (with Norman Panama) IT HAD TO BE YOU, Col

## G

### HAROLD GOLDMAN

\*Contributor to Screenplay construction and Dialogue THE BIG CLOCK, Par

### JERRY GRUSKIN

Joint Screenplay (with Norman S. Hall) SLIPPY McGEE, Rep

## H

### GEORGE HALASZ

Joint Screenplay (with Leslie Vale) LINDA, BE GOOD, Cameo Productions

### NORMAN S. HALL

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Joint Screenplay (with Jerry Gruskin) SLIPPY McGEE, Rep

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### DON HARTMAN

Joint Story (with Allen Boretz) IT HAD TO BE YOU, Col

### LAWRENCE HAZARD

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### BEN HECHT

Joint Screenplay (with Charles Lederer) RIDE THE PINK HORSE, U. I.

### DAVID HERTZ

Sole Screenplay DAISY KENYON, Fox

### CHARLES HOFFMAN

Sole Screenplay THAT HAGEN GIRL, WB

### GEOFFREY HOMES

Joint Screenplay (with Hugo Butler) ROUGHSHOD, RKO

### ARTHUR HORMAN

\*Contributor to Screenplay THEY PASSED THIS WAY, Enterprise

### NORMAN HOUSTON

Sole Screenplay WILD HORSE MESA, RKO

### ROY HUGGINS

Sole Screenplay and Novel Basis I LOVE TROUBLE (Cornell Pic.) Col

### DOROTHY B. HUGHES

Novel Basis RIDE THE PINK HORSE, U. I.

### DICK IRVING HYLAND

Joint Screenplay (with Frank Fenton) and Sole Story MEMORY OF LOVE, RKO  
Joint Story (with Howard Harris) LINDA, BE GOOD, Cameo Productions

## K

### GARSON KANIN

Joint Original Screenplay (with Ruth Gordon) A DOUBLE LIFE, U. I.

### KARL KAMB

Joint Screenplay (with Frank Butler) WHISPERING SMITH, Par

### ROBERT E. KENT

Joint Original Screenplay (with Crane Wilbur) RED STALLION (Eagle-Lion) PRC

### DOROTHY KINGSLEY

Joint Screenplay (with Dorothy Cooper, Charles Martin and Hans Wilhelm) ON AN ISLAND WITH YOU, MGM

## L

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Sole Screenplay THE BIG CLOCK, Par

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Joint Adaptation (with Donald Ogden Stewart) CASS TIMBERLANE, MGM

## HAL LONG

Sole Story THE FABULOUS TEXAN, Rep

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Joint Screenplay (with Harriet Frank, Jr.) and Sole Novel Basis SILVER RIVER, WB

## Mc

### HORACE MCCOY

Joint Screenplay (with Lawrence Hazard) THE FABULOUS TEXAN, Rep

### ST. CLAIR MCKELWAY

Joint Screenplay (with Leo Rosten) SLEEP, MY LOVE, Triangle Productions

### VICTOR MCLEOD

Joint Screenplay (with Jameson Brewer) TWO BLONDES AND A REDHEAD, (Kay Pic.) Col

## M

### ALBERT MALTZ

Joint Screenplay (with Malvin Wald) THE NAKED CITY, U. I.

### DON MARTIN

Story and Adaptation LIGHTHOUSE, (Walter Colmes Prod.) PRC

### CHARLES MARTIN

Joint Story (with Hans Wilhelm) and Joint Screenplay (with Dorothy Kingsley, Dorothy Cooper, and Hans Wilhelm) ON AN ISLAND WITH YOU, MGM

### HENRY MORITZ

Sole Story WHEN A GIRL'S BEAUTIFUL, Col

## N

### ROBERT NATHAN

Sole Novel Basis THE BISHOP'S WIFE, Goldwyn

### JACK NATTEFORD

Joint Story (with Luci Ward) and Joint Screenplay (with Charles O'Neal and Luci Ward) RETURN OF THE BADMEN, RKO  
Joint Story (with Luci Ward) and Joint Screenplay (with Luci Ward and William Bowers) BLACK BART, HIGHWAYMAN, U. I.

### SLOAN NIBLEY

Sole Original Screenplay THE GAY RANCHERO, Rep

## O

### CHARLES O'NEAL

Joint Screenplay (with Jack Natteford and Luci Ward) RETURN OF THE BADMEN, RKO

### GEORGE OPPENHEIMER

Joint Screenplay (with Thomas Lennon and George Bruce) KILLER MCCOY, MGM

## P

### NORMAN PANAMA

Joint Screenplay (with Melvin Frank) IT HAD TO BE YOU, Col

### JOSEPH POLAND

Sole Original Screenplay BLACK HILLS, PRC

## R

### NICHOLAS RAY

Sole Adaptation YOUR RED WAGON, RKO

### MARGUERITE ROBERTS

Joint Screenplay (with Arthur Wimperis) IF WINTER COMES, MGM

Joint Screenplay (with Zoe Akins) AS YOU DESIRE ME, MGM

### CASEY ROBINSON

Sole Adaptation AS YOU DESIRE ME, MGM

### LEO ROSTEN

Joint Screenplay (with St. Clair McKelway) and Sole Novel Basis SLEEP, MY LOVE, Triangle Productions

### LOUISE ROUSSEAU

Sole Original Screenplay UNDER COLORADO SKIES, Rep

## S

### CHARLES SCHNEE

Sole Screenplay YOUR RED WAGON, RKO  
Joint Screenplay (with Borden Chase) RED RIVER, Monterey Productions

\*Contributor to Dialogue MEMORY OF LOVE, RKO

## RAYMOND SCHROCK

Joint Story (with Jerry Warner) THE CRIME DOCTOR'S GAMBLE, Col

## ROBERT E. SHERWOOD

Joint Screenplay (with Leonardo Bercovici) THE BISHOP'S WIFE, Goldwyn

## BARRY SHIPMAN

Sole Original Screenplay SMOKY RIVER SERENADE, Col

## SOL SHOR

Joint Original Screenplay (with Franklyn Adreon, Basil Dickey and Jesse Duffy) G-MEN NEVER FORGET, Rep

## CHARLES SHOWS

Joint Original Screenplay (with Lou Lilly) DOG CRAZY (S) Par

Joint Original Screenplay (with Lou Lilly) MONKEYSHINES (S) Par

## GEORGE SLAVIN

Sole Story and Joint Screenplay (with Barry Trivers) INTRIGUE, Star Films

## EARLE SNEEL

Joint Screenplay (with Jack Townley) THE LAST ROUNDUP, Col

## DONALD OGDEN STEWART

Sole Screenplay and Joint Adaptation (with Sonya Levien) CASS TIMBERLANE, MGM

## T

### CHARLES L. TEDFORD

Sole Screenplay NATION ON SKIS (S) WB  
Sole Screenplay SPORTS DOWN UNDER, (S) WB

### JACK TOWNLEY

Joint Screenplay (with Earle Snell) and Sole Story THE LAST ROUNDUP, Col

### BARRY TRIVERS

Joint Screenplay (with George Slavin) INTRIGUE, Star Films

## V

### LESLIE VALE

Joint Screenplay (with George Halasz) LINDA, BE GOOD, Cameo Productions

### JOHN VAN DRUTEN

Play Basis I REMEMBER MAMA, RKO

### PETER VIERTEL

Sole Story ROUGHSHOD, RKO

## W

### MALVIN WALD

Sole Story and Joint Screenplay (with Albert Maltz) THE NAKED CITY, U. I.

### LUCI WARD

Joint Story (with Jack Natteford) and Joint Screenplay (with Jack Natteford and Charles O'Neal) RETURN OF THE BADMEN, RKO  
Joint Story (with Jack Natteford) and Joint Screenplay (with Jack Natteford and William Bowers) BLACK BART, HIGHWAYMAN, U. I.

### JERRY WARNER

Joint Story (with Raymond Schrock) THE CRIME DOCTOR'S GAMBLE, Col

### BRENDA WEISBERG

Sole Screenplay WHEN A GIRL'S BEAUTIFUL, Col

### GEORGE WELLS

Joint Adaptation (with Edward Chodorov) THE HUCKSTERS, MGM

### CRANE WILBUR

Joint Screenplay (with Robert E. Kent) THE RED STALLION, Eagle-Lion

### HANS WILHELM

Joint Story (with Charles Martin) and Joint Screenplay (with Dorothy Kingsley, Dorothy Cooper and Charles Martin) ON AN ISLAND WITH YOU, MGM

### ROBERT C. WILLIAMS

Sole Original Screenplay OUTLAWS OF GHOST TOWN, Rep

### ARTHUR WIMPERIS

Joint Screenplay (with Marguerite Roberts) IF WINTER COMES, MGM

## Y

### DOROTHY YOST

Joint Screenplay (with Dwight Cummins) THE STRAWBERRY ROAN, (Gene Autry Prod.) Col

### NEDRICK YOUNG

Sole Original Screenplay THAT GUY JOE PALOOKA, Mono

## Z

### JULIAN ZIMET

Sole Original Story STRAWBERRY ROAN (Gene Autry Prod.) Col

# NEXT MONTH AND THEREAFTER

ADRIAN SCOTT

WILLIAM WYLER

EUGEN SHARIN

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DAVID CHANDLER

ISOBEL LENNART

EDWARD ELISCU

LESTER KOENIG

FRANK LAUNDER

T. E. B. CLARKE

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NORMAN LEE

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HOWARD DIMSDALE

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Some of My Worst Friends

Toward a New Realism

Disunion in Vienna

Screen Censorship

Love in Hopewell

Film Musicals

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Gregg Toland: the Man and His Work

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Some British Questions

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# The Screen Writer

## What's Ahead For American Films?

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### A Report on Markets, Taxes, Jobs

From London:

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW  
FRANK LAUNDER  
GUY MORGAN

From Hollywood:

DUDLEY NICHOLS  
RICHARD G. HUBLER  
HOWARD KOCH

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RICHARD COLLINS: *The Screen Writer and Censorship*

EUGEN SHARIN: *Disunion in Vienna*

PAUL TRIVERS: *Town Meeting Tonight!*

EDWARD ELISCU: *Paris Notes*

WILLIAM SERIL: *Film Suspense and Revelation*

DAVID CHANDLER: *Love in Hopewell*

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Vol. 3, No. 5

October, 1947

25c



Editorials • Report and  
Comment • SWG Bulletin  
Correspondence • News  
Notes • Screen Credits



# Letter From London

GUY MORGAN, Honorable Secretary of the Screenwriters' Association, of London, writes to inform the American motion picture industry concerning the recent controversy between his Association and the Association of Cine Technicians.

THE letter from George Elvin, General Secretary of the Association of Cine Technicians and our President's reply, published in the July issue of *The Screen Writer*, led to a month's brisk negotiation on this side, between the Screenwriters' Association, the Producers, and the Technicians, which resulted, after our insistence, in the grades of Screenwriter and Scenario Editor being struck out of the 'Technicians' new Agreement with the Producers.

The statements made in his letter by Mr. Elvin (that the only negotiations with Employers' Federations were undertaken by his Union, that in the new Agreement Screenwriters were treated "the same as other technicians," and that the Union would resist any attempt by a non-trade-union organization today to usurp certain functions of Trades Union organization) brought it urgently to the notice of the Screenwriters Association that a vital matter of principle was involved affecting the whole status of our organization as a recognized negotiating body.

Although there was nothing in the Agreement which could be to the benefit or detriment of feature screenwriters (and no minimum wage was stated), it was clear that the inclusion of screenwriters in the schedule established the principle that the Association of Cine Technicians was the proper body to negotiate for screenwriters.

It was felt therefor that immediate action should be taken by the Screenwriters Association to prevent our silence being subsequently claimed as tacit assent. Letters were therefore sent to the British Film Producers

(Continued on Page 48)

# The Screen Writer

Vol. 3, No. 5

OCTOBER, 1947

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# Some of My Worst Friends

ADRIAN SCOTT

SWG member ADRIAN SCOTT, RKO writer-producer, who recently produced the film *Crossfire* about which the nation is talking, here discusses the motivations behind this film and calls for a coordinated educational campaign against Nazi race prejudices in America and the world.

AT THIS writing, *Crossfire* has just completed six weeks at the Rivoli Theatre in New York, and is continuing to run. Business has been splendid, even boff, in the big city. The picture has been seen in a few resort towns on the Atlantic seaboard. Reports from there are incomplete but aggregate grosses on the first day had the picture running \$150 behind *The Hucksters*, which is the most boff of the pictures currently running. This means, I gather, that the box office is not as pessimistic about *Crossfire* as some people are.

From the very beginning *Crossfire* has been the victim of a strong minority pessimism. It would be easy to say that its source was anti-Semitic, which in part it was. But chiefly it stemmed from sources that had genuine anxiety about the project and thought it would be better left alone. Pictures should be made on the subject, the sources said, but not *Crossfire*. Others among the minority said *Crossfire* should be done differently. Still others: If it were done badly, it would cause more anti-Semitism. Still others: If it were done well, it would be those smart Jews in Hollywood at work, and this, too, would not have the effect of abating but rather increasing anti-Semitism.

This is the partial, bewildering context of *Crossfire's* inception; the whole of it is monumental.

The first rumbling of an anti-Semitic nature came to us when the project was first announced. A troubled few had difficulty assigning the right motives to the making and to the makers of *Crossfire*. Eddie Dmytryk

was labeled a Jew. It was said that I was a Jew, too, a fact which I had managed to conceal for many years but which now came out since I was involved in the project. Of John Paxton, who wrote the screen play, it was noted by someone who read the script that he couldn't possibly have been this brilliant about anti-Semitism unless he himself was an anti-Semite. Finally, it was said categorically that the whole bunch at RKO involved in this project were Jews.

We were not accorded the professional's right of evaluating the contemporary scene or the right of feeling compassion for our fellow men. Nor were we accorded a fundamental Hollywood right of considering ourselves fairly good business men for attempting to make a good picture with a new and vital theme. These, incidentally, were our motives. They haven't changed. We continue to like them.

Since the picture's release the original pessimism has taken some new forms but mostly the old forms remain intact. Naturally, it was very rewarding to find majority opinion behind the film's content, praising the fact that it was done, deploring the fact that it was necessary to be done. But minority opinion has let out a loud wail, placing its attack in the context of that indefatigable cliché that Hollywood has not grown up. The specific attack is confining itself to certain issues in the picture.

Minority opinion attaches itself to what it considers a formidable weakness in content, not quality. In most cases the picture gets a grudgingly proffered "A" in



quality. This minority view seems less an opinion—even a complex opinion—than it does a fascinating and tortuous obscurity. But despite this, and despite its irrelevance, it is well and articulately done. It is, therefore, considerably more dangerous.

Here it is.

*Crossfire*, the argument goes, concerns itself with "lunatic fringe" anti-Semitism (which it primarily does). But, because it deals with lunatic fringe anti-Semitism, it separates itself from majority anti-Semitic practice. Because it separates itself from majority anti-Semitic practice, the film is not about you and me.

The argument shifts and proceeds: The "you and me" kind of anti-Semitism is chiefly the social discrimination variety—the kind which keeps Jews out of a club or a hotel or a camp, which says the Jews own the motion picture industry, which they clearly do not. And this "you and me" kind, it is argued, since it has to do with the kind of anti-Semitism practiced by most Americans, is the kind one ought to make a picture about.

Because *Crossfire* does not deal with this variety of anti-Semitism, the film is not only *not* about you and me but it is, moreover, not valid and not true.

*Crossfire* is not valid and not true because (1) lunatic anti-Semitism either does not exist or it does exist but it is not important; or (2) it is important but it doesn't happen as it does in *Crossfire*; or (3) if it does happen, the picture's attack is nevertheless too confined, it is not a definitive picture of anti-Semitism; therefore, it will not promote understanding of anti-Semitism; or (4) the anti-Semite, Monty, in *Crossfire*, for a variety of obscure reasons, will be considered the hero—audiences will sympathize with him, identify themselves with him. As a result the picture will have the opposite effect of the one intended.

It would be stupid to deny the charge—and it has become a charge—about the "you and me" business. It should be freely admitted at the outset: *Crossfire* is not about you and me. When work was started some two years ago, it was purposely designed *not* to be about you and me. Its attack was limited and confined; its story was limited and confined, as is the story of almost any theatrical experience. To attempt to do a definitive study of anti-Semitism in one picture is a fool's errand. It is proper material for pamphlets and books. But even in these media it is doubtful if definitiveness is possible. Look at the literature which has investigated anti-Semitism. Find, if you can, a one-volume definitive analysis.

Most of the minority charges against *Crossfire* probably dismiss themselves, crumbling with their own faulty and insubstantial structure. But the charge that the lunatic fringe anti-Semitism of *Crossfire* is invalid

and untrue is just silly enough to be picked up by groups which engage wilfully in anti-Semitism. For this reason it should be answered.

**L**UNATIC fringe anti-Semitism is important, dangerously and terribly important. It was important in Hitler's Reich and in Czarist Russia, and in most of the countries of Europe at some time. The social discrimination variety is important, too; so is every minor or major practice which goes to make up the whole hateful body of anti-Semitic practice. And anyone who attempts to estimate which kind of anti-Semitism is most important or which kind should have the most emphasis announces an incomplete understanding of anti-Semitism.

Monty, the anti-Semite in *Crossfire*, exists. This very night he is roaming the streets of Queens, N. Y., looking for a Jew to beat up. He has already beaten up many. He has associates. They are looking to prove their superiority by kicking around someone they consider decidedly inferior. They want a scapegoat for their own insecurity and maladjustment. They are ignorant and organized. They hoot and howl with fanatic energy at the Messianic raving of Gerald L. K. Smith. They are the storm troopers of tomorrow. If this country were depressed enough to fall victim to a Leader, these men would qualify brilliantly for the chieftains of American Buchenwalds and Dachaus.

Such a group, organized and disciplined, a significant section of native American fascists, is a threat to the Jews, and to the entire population. It is depressing at this point in our history to find it necessary to say that.

It is also depressing, after the experience of *Crossfire*, to hear the fancies which are currently being distributed about *Gentleman's Agreement*. This is again a minority opinion, as in the case of *Crossfire*. And it is something which the makers of *Gentleman's Agreement* will face and undoubtedly answer.

The lunatic fringe charge, of course, is not made against *Gentleman's Agreement*. The charge here is that *Gentleman's Agreement* has a dubious device; that, while the book has some fine things to say about anti-Semitism, the point of departure is unsound.

You may have heard it. It goes like this: *Gentleman's Agreement* has a great angle—a slick, glib and familiar angle—but it does not truthfully correspond with experience. The protagonist, Green, who pretends to be a Jew, is not really going through what a Jew goes through. Thus, the picture will have a sense of not happening, or at best, happening in vacuum. The end result will be special—as special as the problem it poses—and, therefore, not effective against total anti-Semitism.

This is an interesting deviation from the criticism of *Crossfire*. Remember, *Crossfire* did not correspond with majority anti-Semitic practice? Well, *Gentleman's Agreement* does. But even though *Gentleman's Agreement* has selected the proper kind of anti-Semitism to attack, it's no good because the *method* of attack is no good!

Discussions of anti-Semitism on this level are weird and unreal. They are debates in limbo. Nobody really cares how they come out. But they are important, recklessly important, for they throw off anti-Semitic particles to be used and to be expanded in the whole body of anti-Semitic practice.

The plain, simple fact is that the device of *Gentleman's Agreement* is brilliant for its purpose. To describe sharply the villainy of anti-Semitism, a man is persecuted and depraved simply because he says he is a Jew. If it is a trick, it is a Swiftian trick. It, furthermore, lends itself to a savage and ruthless exposition of anti-Semitism.

## 2

DURING the preparation of *Crossfire* we had no notion what the specific effect of the picture would be on the anti-Semitic and non-anti-Semitic population. There was no possible way of gauging this except by making a picture and finding out what happened. The full potential impact of a motion picture cannot be completely determined by its script, nor is it possible to survey scientifically the effect of the final product. Anti-Semitism is slippery and takes many forms. A picture could affect one form and not another.

We hoped the effect would be enormous. We weren't so sanguine as to expect the picture would, in one fell swoop, eradicate anti-Semitism. But we did know that public discussion and lively debate have a valuable place in a democratic society. The air could be cleared. The problem could be more clearly visualized. We hoped for this, for more clarity.

Although we rejected the minority disturbance, we nevertheless wondered about it. We wondered, for example, if it had reached our fellow professionals, and if not, would they have the minority reservation without having experienced minority influence.

We decided to ask and to ask further what was their opinion of the possible effect of the picture. We hoped it would be like ours. It wouldn't prove anything scientifically, but it would describe an attitude—whether that attitude was favorably inclined toward this project and others like it; whether that attitude properly stimulated would be the beneficiary of further attitudes and further action against anti-Semitism. We

simply wanted to know the effect—any kind of effect—on professionals and we could get this simply by asking.

A poll was conducted. The specific question of “effect” was asked and one other: Is it possible to end anti-Semitism in America? This latter produced some lively results. The questionees freely spoke their minds. Here are the answers:

*Answer Number One.* Number One thought the effect of pictures dealing with anti-Semitism would be enormous. They would be applauded by the country as a whole, by legislators, educators, churches, etc. He was quite certain that on people of good will who were unconscious of their own anti-Semitic practice the effect would be positive; i.e., in the future they would resist anti-Semitic impulses and be wary of anti-Semitic practice in others. He felt the pictures would have no effect on the practicing anti-Semite, the semi-fascist, who would conclude that these pictures were all Jewish inspired. He thought that anti-Semitism could be ended in America if all the media of communication lent themselves to the project. The project would need the endless cooperation of radio, newspapers, motion pictures, educators and school systems. He added ruefully that although it could be done, it probably wouldn't simply because the media themselves would develop insuperable obstacles to their ever getting together. They would not consider it their job fundamentally. It would belong to somebody else.

*Answer Number Two.* Number Two was uncertain as to what the effect of pictures exposing anti-Semitism would be. Undoubtedly, on some people there would be a salutary effect but he wondered how permanent the effect would be. Attacking aspects of anti-Semitism in pictures would certainly neutralize to a great extent those aspects but wouldn't anti-Semitism find new ways of exploiting itself? Wouldn't it rise in new forms? Wouldn't it transfer itself to other minorities, the Negroes, for example? He hadn't really thought enough about it, but despite his hesitations he felt that the fact that pictures were being made was a great stride forward. He thought anti-Semitism and all minority prejudice could be removed from the American scene by proper educational methods but he would not attempt to guess how long this would take.

*Answer Number Three.* Number Three couldn't estimate or guess at the effect of the pictures being made but he was proud they were being made. Proud of the industry and himself (he was working in one of the pictures). He didn't know how long it would take but he knew it could be done, citing himself as



an example. Until he was 28 years old he was anti-Semitic himself. Not active and not vicious. When he first came to New York from a small Nebraska town, he'd never to his knowledge met a Jew. There weren't any in his town and yet the town was anti-Semitic. During a time he was out of work in New York, he roamed the city—in the slums, middle class and wealthy areas. Particularly in the slums his anti-Semitism was confirmed. He would see dirty people, fat, sloppy. His simple standard of judgment was that he wouldn't like to be invited into these peoples' houses to sit at their table. The thought revolted him. These were Jews. In later years, when his perspective had changed, he confessed to himself that he never knew for certain whether these "dirty, sloppy people" were Jews. They could have been anything: Irish, Polish, Hungarians, or what they actually were, Americans. His real hate was for poverty and the dirt and filth that accompany it. He hated the wrong things; he hated the people instead of the conditions that made people that way. Today he says, "If the seed of anti-Semitism could be removed from me, it can be removed from anybody—when educated properly."

*Answer Number Four.* Number Four felt that the pictures being made were a drop in a bucket. No more. To be really effective, a national campaign of education was necessary, including the help of motion pictures, newspapers, radio, publishers, legislators, congressmen, senators, presidents, school systems and the whole American people. That they could ever get together was an idea which should be properly patronized. But if they did, and stayed together, the demise of anti-Semitism could be estimated as a certainty in a very short time.

*Answer Number Five.* Number Five applauded the pictures being made. He was not interested as a professional in the specific effect of these pictures—he knew it would be good. He didn't know how widespread the effect would be. He felt the violent anti-Semite would ignore and actively campaign against the pictures. He felt that even certain people of good will, unconscious of their anti-Semitic prejudice, ignorant of the full meaning of anti-Semitism, would pick on the pictures and try very hard to find something wrong with them. But all this was irrelevant. What was important was that the most effective voice in the country had the guts to stand up and say anti-Semitism was wrong. Not only was it education for the people but it was education for the professional. Here was a precedent which excites and stimulates the professional to examine his own work. As a good citizen, he wanted anti-Semitism to end. Anti-Semitism, or any minority

prejudice, was the tool of the semi-fascist and the fascist, something to use against the country as a whole, and against him and his family. It was a machine by which democracy could be liquidated. He was certain that anti-Semitism could be ended. He didn't care how long it took, so long as something in a big way was done to combat it.

*Answer Number Six.* This man was an executive in the industry. He couldn't determine the effect of the pictures. But he was convinced that this was a proper step and he hoped the pictures would make a lot of money, for, he argued, this would guarantee that many people would see them. But whether money was made or not was not of first importance. Whether the pictures were big successes, moderate successes or miserable failures was not of first importance. The importance was the public service. The industry occasionally should make pictures, he felt, with the objective of servicing democratic institutions. He considered prejudice of any kind anti-democratic. If the pictures fail, they should be written off and made available to anyone or any organization that wanted to show them.

*Answer Number Seven.* This man was a veteran. He thought it was possible to neutralize anti-Semitism and having been abroad in Germany he thought we damn well better had. Anti-Semitism in pre-Hitler Germany was far less extensive than it is here now. He was appalled when he came home from the war at the extent to which we have continued to underestimate minority prejudice. We have learned some lessons from the war, he thought, but we have not learned enough. We have failed to understand that with existing prejudices against the Jews and the Negroes and other minorities, it would be simple—so very simple—for an American Fuehrer to whip this country into a violent and ghastly hatred as a step toward the eventual destruction of our democratic institutions. In depression, which our most conservative economists agree is coming, the soil for demagoguery grows rich and fertile. The minority becomes the scapegoat and the scapegoat the smoke screen for anti-democratic activity. In this context, anyone who subscribes to full democratic practice is expendable.

THESE are some of the answers. There were more, about twenty in all but there isn't enough space to report them.

On the whole the experiment, however unscientific it might seem to Mr. Gallup, was successful. A majority approved the pictures, were pleased that the subject

was being aired in frank terms, agreed that the techniques so far developed for battling anti-Semitism have proved miserable failures.

One opinion was violent on the subject of the frail intellectual who would snipe and pick and submit his own anxiety as proof that these pictures will cause more anti-Semitism—whose real position when examined closely would prevent pictures on anti-Semitism from being made at all.

Everyone realized it was a gigantic job to neutralize anti-Semitism but that perhaps as a result of these pictures, activity would be hastened. But there was no absolute, positive guarantee that this would be done. It seemed rather that the only positive guarantee was that anti-Semitism would continue.

This is true. Anti-Semitism will continue. The pictures, when they have been released nationally and have completed their runs, will certainly have the effect of abating somewhat the virulence of anti-Semitism. But at best the effect is temporary. These pictures are no permanent cure. For a year or perhaps five years they will be shown and used, but in the end, they cannot be counted on to handle the job of servicing a nation riddled with prejudice. There is no proof that any program, legislative or educational, now in work is large enough in scope to defend successfully our people against prejudice of whatever kind.

Although the poll confirmed our hopes about *Cross-fire*, it brought to the foreground a new and grave concern: The motion picture industry had lifted the lid on a controversy on a national scale; it would hardly accrue to its credit to allow that controversy to be debated or aired superficially.

Medicine would not put a highly infectious patient in a fine hospital bed and deny him the use of penicillin. Motion pictures cannot make two or five or even ten films and announce their responsibility has been discharged. If the industry believes, and not simply pays lip service to the notion that American life guarantees freedom from prejudice, as the pictures on anti-Semitism will say directly or indirectly, then clearly there is a responsibility facing the industry.

The responsibility, very simply, is to implement the job already started.

In the course of conducting the poll, a number of gifted people said they were available for use in combating minority prejudice. This was enough encouragement to ask other people among our actors, directors, producers and writers if they would be willing to give their services to making pictures on anti-Semitism and minority prejudice.

No one refused.

They agreed to make time if they were busy. They

were all stimulated by the prospect and not a few pointed out a precedent exists. No studio in the business made a penny on pictures produced for the Army or Navy during wartime. True, this was a national crisis, but as someone pointed out, there is a crisis among minorities. When any minority is abused, degraded or deprived of earning a living, this constitutes a crisis for the entire nation.

THE broad program is yet to be devised. But suppose it went something like this:

The program of pictures would be shorts—documentaries, if you prefer that word—made by some of the industry's finest craftsmen. Individually, they would deal with one aspect of anti-minority practice. They would be designed for the consumption of all age groups. For the very young, obviously a cartoon. For college groups, a more mature analysis. One picture could possibly lay low the infamous "Christ killer" legend. Another could treat with anti-Semitism among the Negroes. Several could be devoted to the historical aspects of anti-Semitism. And so on, until the whole body of anti-Semitism is exposed.

These pictures would be made with the assistance of experts — psychologists, social workers, effective fighters against race and minority prejudice.

They would be made available free of charge to anyone who requested them. To social organizations, to school systems, to labor organizations, to colleges, to motion picture exhibitors, etc., etc.

Twenty shorts would be enough to start the program, enough to service the country for five years, say. A production expert figures, with services donated by those who can afford it, the pictures should cost less than \$10,000 apiece. My very poor arithmetic makes the price per day for five years about one hundred dollars.

If this job is done, if these pictures are made, the nation will be given the machinery by which a large scale operation can be instituted. Everyone applauds the yearly campaigns of good will organizations to combat prejudice; but these good will organizations do not have enough weapons. One week, every year, is not enough time to devote to the destruction of prejudice. Doctors would go mad if they were permitted to work only one week on the cure for polio or cancer. We would still have no cure for syphilis if Ehrlich assigned one week a year to find his specific. It's a full-time job. To destroy a mass prejudice, a mass instrument is necessary. A motion picture program is the start. But a big start.

Clearly, we have the facilities in this country democratically mobilized to work effectively for the destruction of anti-Semitism or any minority prejudice.

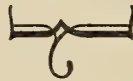


## THE SCREEN WRITER

Tragedy will befall us if as a result of the program spontaneously combusting nothing is done to follow it up. The time will be ripe a few months hence for action. A certain conditioning in public thinking will

have taken place. The challenge of action will then face us.

Some of my worst friends are those who ignore or refuse this challenge.



*Writer-Director F. Hugh Herbert, SWG secretary, has written this brief epilogue to his widely reprinted satire, Subject: Bindle Biog, published in the September issue of The Screen Writer:*

### Subject: Bindle Biog

*(A Postscript)*

By

F. HUGH HERBERT

IMPERIAL PICTURES  
West Coast Studios

Executive Board  
Screen Writers Guild  
1655 N. Cherokee  
Hollywood, Cal.

#### SUBJECT: The Bindle Swindle

Gentlemen:

Please consider this letter my application for active membership in the Screen Writers Guild. I have carefully read your by-laws and constitution and believe that I qualify for active membership on the basis of having been the sole author of the final shooting script of *The Bindle Swindle*.

I have been informed that a credit dispute currently exists regarding the screenplay between Messrs. Herbert Keeler, Gilbert Gripes, Phoebe Quillan, Bertram Parch and other writers who claim to have contributed to it, and that the matter is now being arbitrated by the Screen Writers Guild.

Under separate cover I am sending you affidavits from my secretary, my executive assistant, my production aide, and other disinterested parties attesting to the fact that I wrote the shooting script entirely by myself and I am therefore entitled to solo screen credit.

If oral hearings are to be held in this matter I desire to be present, and would like permission to be legally represented by Messrs. Gibfel, McPherson and Gibfel, my attorneys.

Anticipating favorable action by your board, I enclose my check in the sum of \$12 for my dues as an active member of the Screen Writers Guild.

Very truly yours,

J. K. HOFFHEIMER  
Executive Producer

# Film Suspense and Revelation

WILLIAM SERIL

WILLIAM SERIL is a New York writer and film critic. During the war he served with the Army Special Services Office overseas and helped organize the Camp Shows program in the West Pacific.

OF the many modes of expression utilized by the motion picture medium to develop narrative and dramatic structure, one of the most individually impressive is its unique *visual* ability to suggest sudden, vivid insights, with an *unanticipated* graphic impact.

This scope, achieved both by edited film and the moving camera, was inherent in the maturing of the silent film. And the technical proficiency achieved in the use of sound and dialogue has merely embellished, but not discarded, this rudimentary manner of pictorial representation which enables the screen to intimate change and perception in its own peculiarly arresting fashion.

In the English movie *Thunder Rock* there is a striking episode that illustrates the effectiveness with which this pliancy of the cinema can be employed in the modern sound film:

The central figure of the story, an anti-Fascist journalist, has been lecturing throughout Britain, in an attempt to convince his countrymen of the imminence of war; it is 1938. The sequence opens with him on the rostrum, forcefully detailing the activities and attitudes that are hastening Europe and the world into disaster. This is a deeply moving harangue, you feel. But as the camera gradually recedes from the speaker's platform toward the rear of the auditorium, it despairingly reveals that he has been talking to a pitifully small and shockingly unresponsive audience.

Here, aspect and appreciation have been radically altered. The ambulatory camera has served to disclose something, surprising to the spectator, yet *already known*, as it were, to the characters in the action. The startling execution with which it affects the beholder, given this sharp, different discernment, exemplifies an elemental story-telling device which is intrinsically cinematic. The screen, in this eye-perceiving way, can convey an idea with marked style and singularity.

A brief, compelling instance of the same idiomatic usage was accomplished by editing two related footages,

in the recent documentary release *Passport To Nowhere* (*This Is America* series):

The picture deals with the tragic plight of the Displaced Persons in war-ravaged Europe. Halfway through the harrowing recital that has been unreeling, a semi-close-up presents two laughing, happy children—in a D. P. camp. They are playing a game at a billiard-like table. And you are momentarily relieved, amidst the sorrow of so many hopeless millions, to indulge this fleeting glimmer of childhood joy. Then, the next shot offers a rear view of the same two boys, preoccupied with their fun. Both of them, you now realize, are one-legged. Immediately the irony of their gaiety and laughter is poignantly juxtaposed to the sudden inference of this unexpected revelation.

Montage was cleverly employed to achieve a surprise effect, similar in its fundamental film structure, for *Miracle On 34th Street*.

The theme of this yarn is built around the merchandising activities of Macy's Department Store. At one point, the camera presents a succession of views wherein newspaper display advertisements of Macy competitors are being clipped, mounted and assembled. Presumably, these ads are to be shown to Macy executives, for competitor evaluation. But, no! The final shot of the montage proclaims, amazingly, that the ads have been gathered into a Macy's customers' guide book. Macy's is actually going to recommend merchandise offered by its rivals!

Disney's animators sketched-out a dainty trifle in this identical vein of *delayed* visual elucidation, for the the andante treatment of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony in *Fantasia*.

At the start of the second movement, you are near the edge of a brook, watching several nymph-like maidens, bathing; only their heads are visible, at first. The camera pursues one of them, as she swims toward the bank of the stream and proceeds to emerge from the water. You begin to see her nakedness, now, and expect more. But, quickly, an astonishing discovery is



made. Her lower portion is not that of a woman; she is half-horse!. . . Thus the centauret is introduced.

**T**HERE is a kindred type of belated visual discovery, on the screen, which impresses the viewer with the abrupt observation of something already known only to *certain* characters in the action; the onlooker is granted an awareness of the secret:

*The Show Off* included a scene in which the hero, pondering the opportunity of a date with a female acquaintance, importantly consults his appointment book and advises her that he already has a full schedule of engagements. Meanwhile, however, the camera has given you a close-up glance at the page which he is perusing. There is nothing written on it!

In *The Maltese Falcon* a detective is shown walking through a crowded street. Somewhere along the way, the screen picks-up and begins to concentrate on another man who has started to follow him. You, the bystander, have realized the presence and purpose of the shadower before the man chased does.

A taut mystery measure occurs in *And Then There Were None*. Looking-on, you discover a murdered body, while the actors, nearby in the frame, are still unaware of the whereabouts and death of the victim. An incident in *The Cat People* has a young woman answering a ringing telephone. No one responds to her "hello"; but a direct film cut indicates who is silent on the other end of the line.

Even when it is of very short duration, this eye-given awareness can create disturbing emotional intensity, as in the silent German melodrama *Variety*:

The lover, in the hallway, starts to unlock the door of his hotel room, after a tête-à-tête with his partner's wife. As he opens the door to enter, you hasten to the semi-dark interior of the room, where the cuckolded husband is unexpectedly found, awaiting him, just before the light is switched on.

Fitting into this genre, too, is the artifice of revising the import of a screen conversation, by the incisive, unforeseen exposure of an eavesdropper. It was accomplished in *The Yearling* by editing, with a panning maneuver in *Rebecca* and *Laura*, and through a traveling camera device in the British *To The Victor*. More remarkable was the enormously effective result achieved in *The Magnificent Ambersons*: Moving over the speakers' heads, through the hallway and along the staircase of the mansion, the camera searchingly betrays first one, and at a higher landing, a second person, overhearing the dialogue.

Then, too, the screen can allow the spectator and actor to apprehend something *concomitantly*.

This category might include the resolving of dilem-

mas and crises by the trick of transforming them, miraculously, into feverish dreams, with the protagonist providentially awakening to a bewildered realization.

But a more exact case in point was contained in the English *Storm In A Teacup*: With daughter standing by, father is consoling a dejected, tearful woman friend. Next, the father's hand is seen, in close-up, as he desiringly fondles the lady's back. He cannot execute this caress furtively enough, however; for, from the perplexed look on the daughter's face, you know that she has witnessed it all.

The climax of the silent screen comedy *The Navigator* has its locale on a tropical island, where the shipwrecked lovers are being attacked by an army of savage cannibals. About to be captured, the fugitives have retreated, hand in hand, into the ocean. Just as the barbaric pursuers are about to pounce on them, the two realize that they are standing on the deck of a submarine which is slowly surfacing.

The last scene of the aforementioned *Miracle On 34th Street* takes place in the new house which a little girl had wanted—and gotten—for Christmas. The young lawyer who has just proved, in court, that there is a Santa Claus, now seriously begins to doubt that Kringle has had anything to do with the fulfilling of the child's wish. Nevertheless, he and the camera are eventually reassured, by the discovery of old Kris' walking stick, standing in a corner of the room.

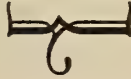
**S**TILL another basic characteristic of cinematic revelation can be found in *forehand* visual interpolation. The spectator has recognition of something, unknown, as yet, to *any* of the players. An inanimate object is converted, here, into a "motor-image," which will now take an active part in the outcome of a situation. The anticipative knowledge heightens dramatic tension, as the movie-goer becomes anxiously concerned about the welfare of the unaware actor.

Often interposed, in this guise, are phenomena of nature: floods, storms, rainfall, active volcanoes, etc. Moreover, it is quite usual, by this means, to observe: water overflowing, ice weakening or forming, wheels loosening, articles scattered by wind, bridges wrecked, gas escaping, highways torn-up and structures collapsing.

The scenario of *I Stole A Million* required that an empty taxi-cab, insecurely parked on a San Francisco hill, start rolling down the inclined street, ending in the bay before its driver could find out and prevent the misfortune. In *The Late George Apley* a man takes his overcoat from a hanger, and while putting it on, unwittingly loses a letter from the pocket.

Another depiction of this sort was concocted for *Bringing Up Baby*: The camera-eye glimpses the accidental, calamitous detaching of a very essential posterior part of a young lady's evening gown, caught on something, as she and her escort, both ignorant of this mishap, are about to enter a room crowded with people.

These excerpts exemplify only one associative phase of film vernacular. When woven into the plastic fabric of a screenplay, the processes of advance, concurrent and retarded visual revelation can significantly enhance the intimate, individual scope of the motion picture. They *are* cinemode.



## The Writers Share

Following are comments on the contribution of writers to the motion picture industry, as gleaned from the Louella Parsons Sunday evening radio program on the American Broadcasting Company network:

On August 24 Jerry Wald, Warner Bros. producer and Miss Parsons' guest star on the program said:

"I think that the writer is the most important contributor to the success or failure of a film, even more important than the producer . . . but of course I don't feel that writers should be paid as much."

On Sept. 7 William Powell, star in the current film *Life With Father*, commented on Donald Ogden Stewart's great script, and then said:

"Louella, just between us, whatever a motion picture star is worth, you can take it from me that the writer of a good script is worth at least twice that."



# Disunion in Vienna

EUGEN SHARIN

EUGEN SHARIN, an associate member of SWG, served as American Films Officer in Austria. He has worked in Hollywood as a writer and technical director, and is now in Europe again on a film mission.

THE RUSSIAN colonel was a big man, bullet-headed and barrel-chested, and he did not like what the Americans had done. The American Film Officer was a civilian in uniform, quiet-mannered but sharp-tongued, and he did not like that the Russians did not like what he, too, had done. The meeting was expected to bring forth some fireworks. Assistants on both sides felt like looking for buckets and sponges. But the ornate parlor of a suite in Vienna's old Hotel Imperial never turned into a boxing ring.

"*Ya ne saglassny!*" the colonel thundered.

"The Colonel says he does not agree," the translator said.

The American nodded.

The colonel looked sternly first at the inkwell in front of him, then at his adversary.

"I represent the Marshal," he said, frowning. The Marshal was Ivan Konev, liberator of Vienna, commander of all Russian forces in Austria. It sounded ominous.

"I have been charged with transmitting a request from the Marshal," the colonel went on.

The Russians were always formal like that. They used colonels as messenger boys, sometimes, and the officer in question was not supposed to exercise his own judgment, or contribute anything toward settling matters. All he had to do was transmit messages and receive replies, if any.

"I shall now put the request before you," the Russian said.

The American nodded again but said nothing. The whole thing boded no good. Film matters in Austria were complicated enough, and misunderstood enough by his own HQ, without the Russians disagreeing again. They were doing it all the time.

"Please go on," he said, just to say something.

"Precisely," the colonel said, looking straight at the American. "It is the Marshal's wish to see *The Great Dictator*."

The American was startled. He looked at his two companions. They seemed puzzled.

"The Marshal is very fond of Charles Chaplin," the colonel said. There was no mistake. The anticlimax was not a figment of the imagination. The Film Officer found himself:

"We shall be pleased to fulfill the Marshal's wish," he said.

"You have a print of the picture?" the Russian asked, solicitously.

"We have," the American said, instantly, like a fighter rising to the charge. What does he know of my troubles, he wondered.

"*Organizatzya!*" the Russian beamed, admiringly. He looked at his satellites. They were all beaming. "Some organization! These Americans! They have everything!"

The Americans rose to leave, but the colonel was now all gracious host. Vodka appeared from a sideboard and a small chest yielded black bread, sardines and caviar. Charles Chaplin was toasted, then Russia and America, and, of course *organizatzya*, that most wonderful of all American traits, that miracle of our age, triumph of technology!

The colonel smiled. Shaking hands with his opposite number, the American Film Officer, he repeated his war cry. "*Ya ne saglassny*," he said, but this time it did not sound so stern but rather like a friendly parting shot. He did not agree, as a matter of principle, but there were no hard feelings and what it was that he did not agree with was definitely lost in the mists of vodka and goodfellowship. This was Vienna, after all, a city of pleasant, even gay, traditions, we were Allies, Chaplin was a great artist, and what was a routine disagreement in the fact of this wonderful, wonderful *organizatzya*?

ACTUALLY, the disagreement was not a trifling as all that and the *organizatzya* was, alas, far from what it was cracked up to be.

When the shooting subsided, Vienna's reviving movie life presented a unique situation to the victors. But the

chance to re-educate a vanquished population via the screen was thoroughly bungled by Russians (the first on the scene) and Americans alike.

As soon as the siege was lifted, the Viennese could be expected to flock to the movies. For almost a year there had been no new German films—public transportation had broken down so completely throughout the country that films could not be circulated, except within the smallest areas. Deliveries were made by handcart or messenger only. Theaters played old films for the fifth and sixth time and the public, denied all other theatrical entertainment during the last stage of the war, had patiently studied and re-studied the fine points of pictures long past their prime. When liberation came, Allied films were just as consciously expected and eagerly anticipated as food: the people were willing and ready to be cured of their acute and chronic indigestion of the mind. Paper shortages and badly-bombed premises meant nothing—publications of all sorts multiplied and there was a mushroom-like growth of cabarets of every description. The opera reopened and so did most legitimate theatres. Concerts became more frequent than ever—the Viennese were revenging themselves for the Nazis' curtailing of their traditionally lush and thriving artistic life, and with a bang.

Unfortunately, in the field of motion pictures, the resurrection was a long time coming. Instead of specially chosen and appropriate films, the victorious Allies, without exception, lagged badly in their efforts to bring new fare to the screens of Austria. To make up, perhaps, for the poor start, they threw in practically everything later, including the proverbial kitchen sink. In an effort to cater to the public's hunger for non-Nazi entertainment, if not re-education, they overfed the willing populace with seven years' product of all varieties. (The unavoidable indigestion is just setting in now).

The Russians' first move was to bring in, without much fanfare, six programs consisting of a feature and a newsreel each. These were exhibited in a dozen or so theatres simultaneously, every print being "bicycled" between two houses all the time. The Russians' great effort was almost completely wasted. Ravenous as they were for new films, the Viennese stayed away from the Russian feast. The six programs grossed about as much as a hit would bring in one day in a single theatre. The reason for this was the Russians' quite unusual naïveté: they had left their pictures in the original Russian, without subtitles, without dubbed-in German dialogue, narration or explanation of any kind. But they learned their lesson in a comparatively short time. About two months later they corrected this oversight. Russian films were withdrawn altogether. They reappeared only after a studio, hastily put into operation in Berlin, was

able to deliver versions with a dubbed-in German soundtrack instead of the original Russian dialogue.

When the hybrid pictures, and some subtitled ones, became available, the Russians made a deal with an outfit called Austria Film to distribute them. In their new garb many of the pictures were successful, but there was a fly in the ointment. The Russians had considered the official-sounding Austria Film an Austrian state organization, somewhat similar to their own Soyuskino or State Film Trust. Actually, Austria Film was a private organization that had set up business in the abandoned premises of the defunct German Reich Film Monopoly, distributing into the bargain all but the most offensive Nazi-made pictures to theatres reopening all over Vienna and the Russian Zone.

To make matters worse, the actual state of affairs was discovered and made public by the Americans. When an American contingent entered Vienna, several months after the liberation, the city's Film Row (Neubaugasse) was found to be in the U. S. sector. The Army's Information Services Branch, Film Section, an OWI-staffed outfit, took over the former Reich Film Monopoly's offices, studios, storage vaults and bank accounts, and Austria Film was out on its ear. This miffed the Russians, mostly because, had they investigated the matter, they might have confiscated everything under the Potsdam agreement, whereas now the Americans were in possession. Past experience showed that the Americans would, sooner or later, turn things over to the Austrians, not without certain attendant publicity. To save face, the Russians for a while hollered that they "did not agree." In the end they not only agreed but refused to let the "founders" of Austria Film keep even the earned commissions on the distribution of Russian films, such as it was during their short-lived tenancy.

THE FACT that all suitable film facilities were in the U. S. sector of Vienna, actually operated by the Americans, could have become a source of embarrassment for the other Allies. To forestall this, they were offered joint use of these facilities. Quite happy, the Russians were the first to accept. The British and French followed suit as soon as their films arrived. The result was a situation unique in the history of motion picture economics: the former Reich Film Monopoly exchange in Austria became the clearing house for all films of the Big Four, plus such confiscated German films as were still allowed to circulate. The "super-monopoly" worked very well. As a matter of policy, no Allied film was ever allowed to stay on the shelves. In other words, no German film could be booked unless all Allied films were "working." This



situation, excellent in itself, served to point up the basic weakness of all the Allies' planning. The actually available number of American and Allied films was so small that the bulk of the business was still being done by the remaining old German pictures. Declared war-booty, these German films were made to bear all expenses—which, in view of their number, still left a considerable surplus—thus affording all Allied pictures a “free ride.”

Nevertheless, and this is the point where the musical comedy trapping can no longer hide the basic seriousness of the proceedings, ISB Films, the Allied monopoly, which had never been planned but just grew, like Topsy, remained a great instrument that was never used to the full possible extent. The organization's outlets, over five hundred theatres, were there, every day in the year. So were capacity audiences, an eager mass of heretofore underprivileged movie-goers. It was a wonderful situation—what spoiled it was only the lack of pictures.

For a long time the U. S. had nothing to show, nothing at all. By one of those mishaps that happen in war, no films had been prepared for Austria. With some nerve and more good fortune, the stockpile reserved for Germany had to be ransacked to get emergency prints for the Cinderella country. Things eased up a bit when, half a year after the start of operations, the OWI and the industry finally got up some steam and prints started arriving in greater number. However, capacity was never attained. Obviously, under such circumstances, there could be no question of a really systematic choice of subjects. There was only one, poor, consolation: the British and French services were no better than our own. Sometimes, especially in the beginning, they were worse.

*Organizatzya*, so unreservedly admired by the Russians, actually manifested itself quite rarely. However, sometimes this fact, by one of those reverses of logic common to turbulent times, turned out to be almost a boon. In the case of *The Great Dictator*, the picture was not on the OWI-approved list for Austria (or Germany). A cable went to Washington to get special permits from the producer and from the OWI for that single showing to Marshal Konev. Simultaneously, in order not to jeopardize valuable Russian good will, a soldier was dispatched to Rome with orders to pick up a print there, come what may. This young man accomplished his mission with dispatch. The picture was shown to Marshal Konev and a bevy of high Russian officers with the anticipated success. Everybody was unreservedly happy.

Film “relations” with the Russians remained most cordial for a long time afterwards. Permission to

obtain a print in Rome and arrange for the screening duly arrived—about four months later.

On another occasion, later, General Mark W. Clark, then commanding U. S. forces in Austria, wished to show *Gone With the Wind* to the Inter-Allied Commission. The British had just opened their season with *Henry V* and the Russians were announcing Eisenstein's *Ivan The Terrible*. *GWTW* had a mission to accomplish. Unfortunately, only conservative methods were used to obtain proper clearances. Necessary authorizations—and a print—were requested through “channels.” High-handed methods, as in the case of *The Great Dictator*, were out. Needless to say, so was the screening. *Gone With The Wind* never showed in Vienna.

POOR advance planning, a capricious choice of pictures and all vagaries of chance could not prevent, after some months that seemed like eternity, Vienna becoming the moviegoer's—and the researcher's—paradise. It became possible there to enjoy, and to study the reactions to a more varied film-fare than was ever assembled anywhere before. If the pictures shown were not all from the international top drawer, nor best-suited for a public somewhat warped in its taste by eight years under Goebbels, they were nevertheless often typical of the country that had produced them.

Films with political content appeared in relatively small numbers. Most of these were, of course, Russian. United States “propaganda” was represented only by OWI documentaries—unless every picture mirroring a certain way of life can be considered propaganda for it. Almost needless to say, some of our films were indeed considered that way, at least by some critics. The reviewers of *Neues Oesterreich*, a leading newspaper, labeled the innocuous comedy *It Started With Eve* (a Deanna Durbin feature) “social-reactionary.” The young man of the film was wealthy, the critic explained. This was to be considered reactionary and setting a bad example because Deanna dared hell and high water to win hand, heart and purse of such a young man in holy matrimony. The picture ran for twenty weeks, nevertheless, but that proves only that the public's mind is less exacting than that of the trained propagandist.

Disregarding Deanna Durbin, America was quite well “sold” to the Viennese. The short OWI films had it all over their Russian counterparts. The reason was not at all in their technical excellence but in the subtlety of their approach, as against the Russians' more blunt and heavy-handed preaching of their doctrines. Shorter films like *Democracy In Action*, *Town Meeting*, *Oswego*, and even *Steeltown* and *Autobi-*

ography of *A Jeep*, did more to "sell" America to Austrian audiences than did that much overrated "American ambassador," the average G. I. Joe. On the other hand, straightforward war reports, such as *Tarawa*, *Battle In The Marianas*, *Attack* and the like, however, well-made, met the same fate as Russia's *Battle of Leningrad*, for example. The newspapers sang praise in unison but the customers stayed home.

A special case was *Death Mills*, the OWI-BMI report on the horrors of the concentration camps. The handling of this vastly effective but gruesome subject posed special problems. In Germany its showing had been made mandatory. Coupled with other documentaries, it had been shown day-and-date in all theatres of a given area. Subsequent research proved this to have been none too fortunate a system: those that did not feel like seeing this piece of "atrocities propaganda" (and they were the very people who should have seen it), simply went without movies that week and never budged from home.

In Austria, the Russians had an interesting experience with an earlier, French-made documentary, *Camps Of Horror*. In Urfahr, a town in the Russian zone, the local commander had decreed that everybody, without exception, had to see it. Russian soldiers were stationed at the theatre, stamping the people's ration cards. After the playdates, unstamped cards were to be invalid in the city's shops. This system, effective as it seemed to be, actually required such a large apparatus for its enforcement that it had to be abandoned. For one thing, people who besieged the Russian commander's offices with requests for exception to be granted bed-ridden members of their families, were too numerous for comfort. Yet this was only one category of exceptions. In view of all this, when *Death Mills* came to be distributed in Austria, it was found best to have it substitute for a newsreel issue. The joint Anglo-American newsreel *Welt im Film*, was mandatory in all theatres, and a great success with the public. Thus, that week, first run theatres got *Death Mills* instead of the newsreel, subsequent runs following as usual. In that way no moviegoer could escape the picture at all. It was shown in every theatre of the land. It is regrettable that existing research facilities were unable to cope with the job of determining fully the impact of the film on the audiences.

**F**ICTIONIZED war films fared much better than actual war reports. People were genuinely interested in America's side of the war, or Britain's or France's. Nevertheless, local sensibilities asserted themselves. Consequently, a war picture that had nothing whatever to do with Austria, could do very well (as did *The Sullivans*, *Action in the North Atlantic* and many

others), but one that had could easily get into trouble. *The Navy Comes Through*, an "action special," was a sell-out for a few days, as was every picture in the beginning. But as soon as word-of-mouth got around, attendance fell off and soon the theatre was altogether empty. What was the trouble? For one thing, there was Carl Esmond, originally a Viennese, playing a sensitive violin-playing sailor, also from Vienna. So far, so good. But the character, sympathetic throughout, makes a speech at the end emphasizing that he wants to be nothing but an American. This was resented by the Austrians. Then there was a Brooklyn sailor, played by Frank Jenks, who hauled down a Nazi flag and then spat on it. This was greeted with icy silence. A willing and voluble member of the audience (rare in those days) put it this way: "Nobody cares for the Nazis, but the flag was our Wehrmacht, too. Everybody was either a soldier himself or had one in the family." Correct or not, that picture grated on the sensibilities of the people and was therefore a poor choice. As propaganda for the American way, it was as much of a flop as *The Sullivans* was a success.

In the category of entertainment pure and simple, all eyes were on Hollywood. Austrian tastes seemed to be running toward musicals, quite proper perhaps for the land of the operetta. Actually, the OWI list contained no large-scale shows of the kind commonly called musicals in this country. Scarcity of Technicolor prints was one of the reasons advanced for this, while another was the reluctance of many companies to release pictures with their top stars during commercially uncertain times of war and its aftermath. The films with music that were shown had only a couple of songs or a production number tucked in here and there. Otherwise they were just everyday comedies. They all went over big. Sonja Henie in *Sun Valley Serenade* skated on and on. Fred Astaire, his pre-war Top Hat still remembered as a symbol of gayer times, scored a big hit in *You Were Never Lovelier*. Other long-familiar, long-missed faces were also greeted as living symbols of freedom once enjoyed, then lost and now perhaps to be recovered. This was doubly true for local boys who had made good in Hollywood in the meantime. S. Z. Sakal caused a tumult when his jowls first flashed on the screen in *Seven Sweethearts*.

The French and British never competed in this field with America. Russia did, to a certain degree. *A Musical Story*, mostly Tschaikowsky, was a hit. So was *They Met in Moscow*. The latter film gave rise to an interesting comment voiced in one of the many seminars and lecture groups that met everywhere in Vienna practically all the time. The people in the Russian film actually look like true unadorned every-day people. In American films, the anonymous commentator pointed



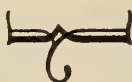
out, they are dressed up, coiffed and manicured within an inch of their lives. So are the sets. The question in the inquirer's mind was whether Hollywood was actually mirroring life in America the way Russian films appeared to mirror life in Moscow and whether, therefore, Americans were really all so well-dressed, well-manicured and unbelievably well-to-do, or whether Hollywood was perhaps glossing things over in a way that was a bit too lavish. (The question had been raised elsewhere, not only in hungry and threadbare Vienna.)

Art-conscious, alive to many theatrical traditions, the public of Vienna is not a low-brow audience. It is sincerely interested in literary and dramatic qualities. This was borne out not only by the box-office successes of several films that had hardly caused a ripple in the U.S. A good example is *All That Money Can Buy*, William Dieterle's picture based on Stephen Vincent Benet's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. There was also the never-ending discussion in the daily press as to certain surprising facets and novel trends of American production. There was what some people called "Hollywood's dream complex." A theory was evolved in all seriousness, in numerous articles appearing coincidentally in various newspapers, that Hollywood was excessively-preoccupied with people's dreams and dreamlike fantasies. The haphazard release list of OWI-ISB afforded some basis for the theory. An exceptional number of films did feature fantasy and many more had at least a dream sequence somewhere. Here is part of that list: *It Happened Tomorrow*, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, *Flesh And Fantasy*, *Tom Dick And Harry*, *All That Money Can Buy*, *I Married A Witch*. Notable British entries were also considered and chalked up to the Hollywood influence: *Blithe Spirit*, *The Seventh Veil*. What would the theory-loving Viennese have said had they known the play that started the cycle: *Lady In The Dark*? As a matter of fact,

the Viennese still have to learn about Hollywood's preoccupation not with dreams, but with cycles.

THE DESIRE to catalog everything properly in the accepted German "scientific" fashion had another interesting outcropping. Goebbels had been screaming for years about jazz madness and what he called "American gangster civilization." No jazz was offered (it will be interesting to see the German and Central European public's response to jive, swing, et al., long maligned by the Nazis), but "gangster films" were another matter. The OWI had ruled them off the list in one big sweep. The public, however, expressed great desire for the forbidden fruit. Sufficient demand will create a supply of sorts. Two relatively mild thrillers, *Across The Pacific* and *The Maltese Falcon*, none of them a *Little Caesar*, became in the public's mind, through spontaneous word-of-mouth comment, real killer-dillers and "gangster dramas." The result was instantaneous: black market operators bought up all tickets for weeks in advance. Barefooted urchins acted as agents doing a thriving business in front of box offices marked: Sold Out. The police finally had to interfere by declaring the films "verboten" for adolescents, thus stemming the tide a little.

These random reactions, sidelights and incidents are but samples from a multitude. They may help to point up the need of doing something, before long, about the insufficient consideration so often shown foreign tastes, traditions and sensibilities, a circumstance that was in part responsible for the poorly-planned choice and subsequent uneven showing of American pictures in post-war Europe. Vienna, for one, was a crossroads, of commerce as well as of the arts, ever since the Middle Ages. As such, it demands earnest consideration from both the East and the West. Motion pictures, as an international medium, have a particular obligation to increase their awareness of the always thrilling, always fruitful interplay of tastes and attitudes in a cosmopolitan field.



# The Screen Writer and Censorship

RICHARD COLLINS

RICHARD COLLINS, a member of the SWG Executive Board, is the author of many notable screen plays. He is a previous contributor to *The Screen Writer*.

LAST spring, in a casual discussion, Thomas Mann said that what was wrong with American films was not lack of liberty, but lack of creativity. It is not hard to understand why the great German author, standing outside the industry, should feel this.

It is true, thought control over this industry is not exercised by storm troopers placed at the door of each office. But the many pressures—all subtler, all gentler—are still efficient. There are two immediately apparent reasons why creativity is being strangled in Hollywood today: the first is the objective censorship operated by such groups as the Breen Office, the Johnston Office, the Tenney Committee, the Thomas Committee, the Hearst press, Pegler and the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals.

Besides there are the pressures from women's organizations, organized church groups—and finally, although often in contradiction to the others, the audience.

The second reason is the self-censorship of writers and other creators in the industry who, as a result of the above pressures, tend themselves to limit their whole field of operation and to play safe.

What is Thought Control in films? . . . How does it operate? . . . Well, for example, the Breen Office does not permit mature sexual relations on the screen. I do not mean smut. Smut is permitted—witness *Duel In the Sun* . . . But I do mean, for example, the treatment of sex in marriage. Those of us who are familiar with the Breen Office can imagine what would happen if a wife expressed one tenth of the desire for her husband that Jennifer Jones expressed for Gregory Peck. Of course the Breen Office takes care of this under the category heading: Pure and Impure Love. . . . I mean, also, by mature sex relations a recognition that marriages are often made in pool rooms and dance halls, and not in heaven. . . . There are, it is true, millions of Americans who believe the latter, and we most certainly respect their point of view. Catholic morality comes out of Catholic religion and it is perfectly proper for a church to make films with its morality. But there

is no reason why the entire motion picture business should accept any one religion or philosophic system as official. In my own recent experience a script was at first rejected by the Breen Office in toto because it takes for granted that divorce is part of our world. Nor are Catholic groups alone: until very recently we had a hush-hush policy concerning Jews on the screen, for which Jewish organizations were responsible.

Besides this religious pressure we are now experiencing political thought control. None of us was asked before to follow Roosevelt's policy, or Hoover's, or Coolidge's—but we were told by Eric Johnston to write films supporting the present American foreign policy. Now, if a writer believes in the Truman Doctrine let him write about it. If this is truth for him—well and good. . . . But if, on the other hand, he does not believe that a temporary political expedient can be accepted as either true or eternal, it is corrupt for him to write about it. What will this same writer do if tomorrow a deal is made which changes the doctrine? What will he do if an opposite political philosophy dominates the American scene? Will he flop over to the new side? Or is it not a classic tenet of a free people and a free art that a writer should write as he believes, and not as he is told?

There are other areas which are under attack as left and subversive. And these areas have been under attack for many years. The first anti-Nazi film, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, was labelled "communist" by Dies and his committee—as was the strong anti-lynching film *Fury*. There are many areas of silence now. These areas have been accepted subjectively by the writers. Faced with objective censorship, we have tried to deal with it—because a writer not only writes for expression, but also to communicate. This means that he always does exercise some censorship in relation to his audience. The writers, therefore, in trying to get around censorship, have either gone deeper and deeper into themselves and reported this subjectively as universal or else have become extremely subtle in their



approaches to reality. In some cases the writer loses the very audience he is trying to reach. He hesitates to explore new areas because he has been taught for many years to try to make films to which no one will object. Obviously the only way to do this is to stop films from reflecting any of the real conflicts and stresses of our society. . . . Yet in spite of this pressure we have succeeded year after year in making memorable films. One has only to look at the Gassner-Nichols *Twenty Best Film Plays* to see the wide variety of subjects that the films have handled. Most of these twenty plays met with success at the box office, but the same subjects which were treated in these films now involve us in very controversial ground—both in American life and in our foreign policy.

We are vastly impressed with such a picture as *Brief Encounter*. This is a fine film, but should it really be astonishing to see a picture that admits there are many middle-class women, leading dreary, dull lives, who want romance even if they have a nice suburban husband and two children? And that they might perhaps even have a fast and unreasonable, and sometimes beautiful relation with another married man—and through all this are neither wicked nor vile?

OUR production code, as a matter of fact, flies in the face of science. Modern psychology and social science teach us that the vices of men come from society. The code takes for granted that these vices are inherent in man's person. This excludes the dynamic of the inter-relation between society and character. Science, for example, says a man drinks to excess out of frustration, not out of weakness. The non-dynamic view accepts brutality as part of our life and fit screen material, just so long as we never explain *why* the people beat each other up. The non-dynamic view makes the producer play with sex as a game, rather than explore the relations between characters. This non-dynamic, static view of human personality creates the gap between life and the screen.

In the world outside the modern sword of Damocles hangs over us all. Yet films have only touched on the greatest of all subjects once, and that was to make the dismally inept and naive *Beginning or the End*. As the atomic age grows more and more complex and life more difficult, as political crisis follows political crisis and human misery grows, as whole systems of morality change in Europe and a nation of four hundred million people steps forward toward independence, the world of the American film grows tidier and tidier. Of course the fact that we are so far away from Maidenek and Buchenwald has something to do with

this. In the main for us Love is the only story. But on other continents there are other concerns which, as yet, the American public scarcely recognizes. Here we have a great and challenging opportunity. First to learn about this change, and second to bring this information to our people. But in order to do this we will have to approach the whole world with curiosity, and then write about it with passion. And today thought control makes both curiosity and passion unrewarding.

Yes, it is a tidy world we have in the films. The production code guarantees this. Adultery is impermissible; all murderers are brought to justice; good triumphs over evil. This is the world of Yes and No . . . of Right and Wrong—of over-simplification. It is the world of the rectory garden and the aunt who leaves us an income of two thousand pounds per annum. It is an out-moded world, and therefore the communication between it and what is real is very tenuous.

This is our problem today, but it is not a new problem in this form or another for creators.

Chekov, in a letter to Kiselev, makes this clear:

"To think that the task of literature is to gather the pure grain from the muck-heap is to reject literature itself. Artistic literature is called so just because it depicts life as it really is. Its aim is truth—unconditional and honest. . . . A literateur is not a confectioner, not a dealer in cosmetics, not an entertainer. . . . He is like any ordinary reporter. What would you say if a newspaper reporter, because of his fastidiousness, were to describe only honest mayors, high-minded ladies and virtuous railroad contractors? . . . To a chemist nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist." And although he is speaking of literature I believe it is equally valid for our own medium. I do not see why what is good for the thousands who read books, should not be good for the millions who see films. I do not see that the reflection of life can do more harm than life itself—rather I believe that the reflection of life accurately will give useful experience to the audience, will enable them to better meet and conquer their day-to-day problems.

IN the high schools of the city of Los Angeles there is a class called Senior Problems. This class has its counterpart in cities all over the United States. It is a class which discusses the future of the senior high school student. These classes discuss world affairs, propaganda, divorce, marriage, love, personality conflicts, petting, venereal diseases, depressions and unemployment. The high school students discuss these subjects openly, sharply and honestly. But there is practically nothing that they are allowed to discuss that we are being allowed to put into films, except their discussions

of the Negro and Jewish questions. And although we have managed to break anti-Semitism out into the open with such pictures as *Crossfire* and the forthcoming *Gentlemen's Agreement*, both of which take courage and strength from their makers—we have done the very reverse with the Negro question. We have solved the Negro problem in Hollywood by ignoring Negroes in pictures. This is the pattern of every problem. Is it any wonder that other countries now have the opportunity to take the lead in films?

In *Great Expectations* there is implied criticism of British legal procedure and the treatment of criminals in England's past. Yet in the United States, exception is taken to a criticism of American Marines in Nicaragua in the film *Margie*. Are we to assume not only that the present Truman policy is above reproach, but also that everything that ever happened in the United States was right? This will be difficult. Following this line, slavery was undoubtedly correct until the day Lincoln signed the emancipation proclamation. On that day it became wrong. Or did it? I have an idea we had better leave this whole area alone. The film *Boomerang* apparently outrages the 100-percenters. Is this because they will not admit that injustice is ever possible? What areas will be left?

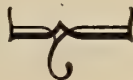
FOR THE screen writer faced with speed-up and unemployment this question is not only aesthetic, but food and drink. He is called upon to write for sale; naturally he exercises a great degree of self-censorship. The pressure on him to conform is very real. Yet, at the same time, the experience of unemployment and insecurity brings him into conflict with the censorship. But it is not only the screen writer who is thus affected, for as the area of creative content shrinks, only one conclusion is possible—the policy of restric-

tion—the policy of the MPA and the Thomas Committee mean ruin for this industry creatively and financially. Beyond that is the less tangible, but equally serious answer: that the creators of the pictures can ruin them because they are, so to speak, in the habit of ruin.

We as writers, as often as not, impose self-censorship even where no open threat of censorship exists. We tax ourselves not only with the real difficulties of writing pictures which will be artistically and commercially successful, but we also impose hidden taxes on ourselves. It is not only in political areas that we as screen writers impose hidden taxes on our realism. As hard as we try to write about marriage, love, infidelity, drunkenness and murder in an absolutely truthful and realistic manner, there is nevertheless a margin of aberration in our thinking which has been enforced upon us by a lifetime of thought control. The free film, on the other hand, pressures the writer into looking into new areas and forces him to meet competition with daring, imagination and vitality.

All that we should ask of a writer is that he should write about objective reality the way it is. The writer should help audiences master reality by imaginatively possessing it. If the screen is free, no police are necessary. As Chekov has said in the same letter: "There is no police which we can consider competent in literary matters. I agree we must have curbs and whips, for knaves find their way even into literature. But think what you will, you cannot find a better police for literature than criticism and the author's own conscience. People have been trying to discover such a police force since the creation of the world—but nothing better has been found."

Nothing better has been found even in 1947. The modern thought police are the servants of obscurity and backwardness, now as always.



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(September 22, 1947)

Columbia—Louella MacFarlane; alternate, Edward Huebsch

MGM—Gladys Lehman; alternate, Anne Chapin; Sidney Boehm, Margaret Fitts, Charles Kaufman.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox—Wanda Tuchok; alternate Richard Murphy.

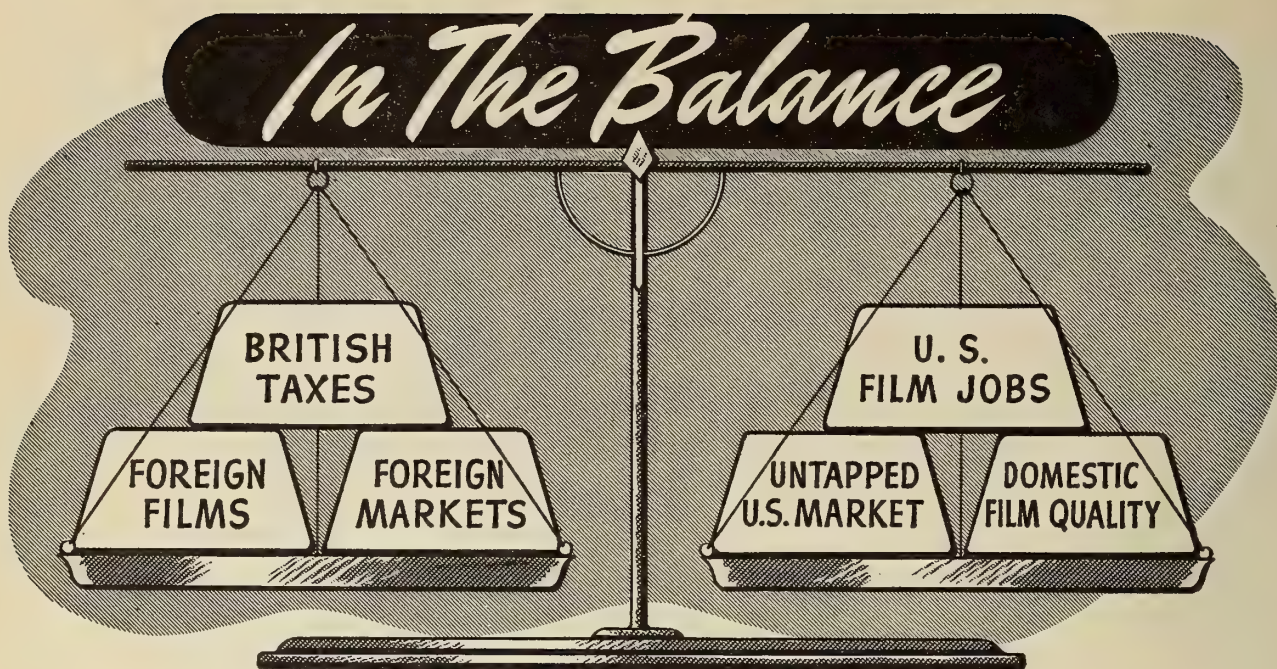
Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks.

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International—Silvia Richards.

RKO—Martin Rackin.





*This special section of The Screen Writer has been prepared in order to give a balanced presentation of the problems affecting the Hollywood motion picture industry in their relation to the foreign market, especially the British market. George Bernard Shaw, Frank Launder and Guy Morgan write from the British point of view. Three Hollywood writers with wide experience in the industry — Dudley Nichols, Richard G. Hubler and Howard Koch — present their points of view. In summation the Editorial Committee presents other statements from authoritative members of the industry and the results of committee research on the subject of film markets, taxes, jobs.*

## Memo to Hollywood from Bernard Shaw

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

*GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, famous playwright and philosopher and a previous contributor to The Screen Writer, here states his views of the British tax and foreign market situation, blames Hollywood for its past sins and suggests a way to improve the market for American films.*

**I**N ECONOMIC principle the seventy-five per cent British tax on American movies is vulgar Protection, to which a nation so inveterately Protectionist as the U. S. A. cannot consistently object.

But as national affairs in the U. S. and the British

Commonwealth are managed by politicians who have no political principles at all, only habits and interests, this point is academic.

The 75 per cent tax is in fact one of the desperate expedients to reduce the export of dollars to which the

British government is being driven by the immediate pressure of events.

For its effect on American film production nobody outside Hollywood cares a rap; and anyhow, nobody knows.

If Hollywood would add to its technical proficiency

some evidence of higher morality than that of dealing with villainy by a sock in the jaw from the virtuous hero, it would make its films indispensable everywhere.

As it is, Hollywood is largely responsible for two world wars.

Sept. 3, 1947

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*It is a curious but an evident fact that the more cinemas Mr. Rank owns the more he is dependent on America to provide films to fill them. The ownership of 650 cinemas is nothing in itself; those cinemas can only earn money as long as they have films to show on their screens. If Mr. Rank won't or can't make enough films, he has to go elsewhere and the only alternative supplier is Hollywood.*

STATEMENT OF BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF CINE-TECHNICIANS.

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## Film Dollars From Lean Pockets

DUDLEY NICHOLS

*DUDLEY NICHOLS served as president of SWG in 1937 and 1938, and was one of the most active builders of Guild unity and strength. He has written, directed and produced many of Hollywood's most famous screen plays.*

I WOULD say offhand that there is no actual problem, only a bad situation created in large part by erroneous production policies of the American film industry.

Far-sighted people could have foreseen this— and worse things—coming. First, if we use lean brains and not fat stomachs to do our thinking, we should know that England—and most of the outer world—is in a desperate plight. We should be thinking how to ease their situation as much as how to force our products on them. It is a time in the world to be recklessly overgenerous—if only to save our own skins. You cannot force our films on an impoverished people and pry dollars out of their shabby pockets. Yet, to quote Emerson, if you make a better mousetrap the world will beat a path to your door—even the whole hungry world. For the mind and heart have hungers as demanding as the stomach's.

Film writers should have been more perturbed over the low quality of American films these last few years than by the temporary loss of foreign markets. British films were no threat to Hollywood when they were juvenile and inept. If we make fine and honest films,

which are not addressed entirely to the bobby soxers, the heartless, and to mental and emotional imbeciles, we need have no worry about the domestic market in a nation of 143 million people. It is the largest and richest market in the world with undreamed of potentials. We have an untapped audience of at least twenty million people in the United States—the mentally adult and emotionally mature people who will not spend their money and their evenings in viewing films made for children.

By “made for children” I do not mean real children's stories which might appeal to all of us, as do Hans Christian Anderson and Lewis Carroll and Stevenson's *Treasure Island* et cetera, nor to charming comedies and tender stories which might be told with humor and a loving touch; I mean trash and hokum and falsities and nightmarish-dreams and lies-about-what-a-human-being-is and lies-about-love and violence-without-motive and violence-without-meaning and violence-without-consequence and brutality-for-the-sake-of brutality and sensationalism-at-any-price and all the other stupid, corrupt ways of misinterpreting the world



## THE SCREEN WRITER

around us and the inner world of imagination which attract the unformed child.

**H**OLLYWOOD no longer depends upon merit in selling films but only on ballyhoo. Ballyhoo has become more important than quality in production. It will not work outside America and will not work forever in America. God knows production costs are too high, because of universal greed—at the bottom no less than at the top—but the time is approaching when more will be spent on ballyhoo than on production.

This takes the importance of film-making away from the creators, who alone can make films, and hands it over to the money-men, who think they can handle the situation until they will wake up one day with even a shrinking domestic market which it will be too late to stem. If we make great and grown-up films the world will demand them and find the dollars.

Let us realize that outside America in recent years, the world has grown up—through suffering and want. Let us face the fact that the world's reality today, outside America, is devastation and hunger and emotional maturity—and the dream too, always the dreaming that makes life possible, a hungry dreaming that has survived trial by fire and that makes our adolescent dreaming look like muck.

Writers are the best and solidest part of the film industry in Hollywood. They can save the industry from its worst errors if they will strive hard for a new integrity in film-making. A good film comes into being only through the enthusiasm of one or more talented persons, usually two—the writer and director—although actors may be embraced by the common enthusiasms which first ignited one person.

Get excited about something—a story of your own or some one else's invention in which you can perceive, by plenty of hard work, a fine film. Impart your enthusiasm to a director in whom you have confidence. Or steam up a star—since the star system is with us. Stars are looking for better films and if you win their enthusiasm they will go to bat for you.

All this communication of enthusiasm is not easy but it is worth while because it will lead to a better day for the writer and, concomitantly, a better day for Hollywood.

Real writers have never been afraid of difficulties; in fact some of our greatest literature has been written in the face of inconceivable difficulties; it is almost as if the difficulties made them better than they otherwise would have been. The film writer has the hardest lot of all. He can never rest. Once the studio gates are opened he must fight, intelligently and reasonably

but unremittingly, for the integrity of his conception.

Writers alone, it seems to me, are disciplined to that kind of devotion to a job of work, in which vanity and personal advantage and every selfish interest must be subordinated to the work itself, which is greater than the doer, just as a fine film is finer than any element which composes it and more important than any individual who helped to make it—more important even than the single individual whose enthusiasm struck the first match.

Remember every film starts from one person's enthusiasm and faith. That is why a handful of directors in Hollywood stands out before the world as representative of American films: these men are invariably film writers, though they do not classify themselves as such and usually call on a writer or writers to assist them in preparing their scripts.

In such cases it is the director whose enthusiasm is forming the projected film; they are using writers simply as collaborators to do hard sweating work and shape the script according to the needs of their various individual styles. This relationship between writer and director need not be without dignity and frequently the writer may bring to such a collaboration as great or even greater creative gifts than are possessed by the director, who has the advantage of being trained in another craft. One sees many excellent working collaborations of this sort, in which the collaborators have profound mutual respect and are generous in crediting each other.

**T**O RETURN to the point of this piece, the problems of marketing American films will dissolve if we put more integrity into our work and openly fight wrong practices and oppose people of executive power in the studios who degrade our work and make hacks of us and who don't want the quality of films to improve because that might endanger their powers and positions.

I should like, for one thing, to see film writers refuse to commence writing a script until a director has been assigned (not on salary: he works for a lump sum) to the production, for it is the director who must put the script on the screen, and some sort of collaboration and discussion are essential to shape the script to what the director understands and feels. No amount of writing early drafts for producers can accomplish this, and no director worth his salt can be handed a script he has not worked on and told to shoot it verbatim. Writing scripts for a producer, who is injecting his own idiosyncratic feelings and critical attitudes into the story, and yet will not be on the set to translate these feelings into film, is one of the most degrading things

I know of. It is a system for incompetents—for hack writers and hack directors.

Let us strive to work harder and better, and insist

on true and dignified methods of working, and not be afraid to risk failure—and let the people at the top worry about markets. They won't have to worry long!

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*I believe that Hollywood has matured since its earlier days. I am convinced that it has a great reserve of creative talent which has never been properly utilized. I am certain that we shall be forced to summon all our resources under the threat of narrowing markets and increasing competition. . . . Hollywood has some notable achievements to its credit, and I am reasonably sure we shall do better in the future.*

SAMUEL GOLDWYN.

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## Let's Find a Substitute For the Tax!

FRANK LAUNDER

*FRANK LAUNDER is president of the British Screen Writers' Association and one of the leading writer-producers of the British motion picture industry.*

SAM, JOHN and friends are playing poker for high stakes. Sam has won nearly all the money. Very soon now, if he wants the game to go on, he will have to redistribute the chips. The alternative is for Sam to retire from the game and leave John and the others either to play together, or join Joe and his school over the way. That seems to be the economic situation at the time of writing. The 75% tax on American films imported into Britain is just one card, in one hand, in this vast game.

There has been a mass of confused and bitter sectional thinking about this tax. The truth is that in her present economic situation Britain cannot afford to continue to pay 70,000,000 dollars a year for a commodity which brings back neither sustenance for her people, nor raw materials with which to manufacture goods for export. She has been obliged to place a large tax on American films. America has retaliated by banning the export of her films to Britain.

For a moment let us examine what further measures could be taken and what might be the repercussions. America could ban the showing of her films already in Britain. She could close down her distribution organi-

zations there. She could prohibit the showing of British films in the States.

Would America, by those methods, succeed in closing down the British cinema and bringing British film production to a stand-still?

The British public today, for the first time in thirty years, is British film-minded. Amongst all the new restrictions and cuts that have been imposed on the British people the 75% tax on American films is the only one which has been received with equanimity. There would be no popular demonstration against a complete withdrawal by Hollywood from the British market.

Could British film producers fill the gap that would be created by an American withdrawal? In the studio space available, by cutting down schedules, they could double their output and thus raise the number of feature films that could be produced annually in Britain by a hundred. A modicum of reissues of old British films would narrow the gap. And finally, Continental film producers, whose product now only shows in the art theatres, would find that the 25% revenue which would accrue to them after payment of the tax, would mean far more to them in cash than 100% did a



month ago. The gap would be closed and the cinemas would remain open.

IT IS true that the takings might fall for the first few months, but as the public became accustomed to the new order of things, as more and more British and Continental stars replaced Hollywood stars in their affections, so box-office receipts would rise again. For this reason and no other America cannot afford to withdraw from the British film market for any length of time. Hollywood must keep her stars before the British public eye. She cannot allow the British to get out of the habit of seeing her films, unless, of course, she is prepared to abandon the British market for good and all.

In my view, the present situation has been brought about largely through the short-sightedness of the

majority of American film producers. The British are entitled to a fair share of their own market. They have never had it. For thirty years Hollywood has refused to allow them to have it. It has used every kind of pressure, political and otherwise, to maintain what has virtually amounted to a stranglehold on the British film market. The chickens have come home to roost.

Every sensible person engaged in British film production knows that it would be an unhealthy situation if American films were not permitted to be shown freely on British screens, in the same way that they feel it is a regrettable state of affairs that the better British films are not freely distributed on the major circuits of the United States.

So let both countries now, in an enlightened mood, sit around a table and find some equitable alternative to the tax.

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*The technical superiority of Hollywood is undisputed. . . . But what our people prefer in British films . . . is the story chosen and the way the story is told. . . . What people want here is not certitude but inquiry; not easy solution but hard problem; not stereotypes but individuals; not glamor but truth, not technical polish but solid raw material.*

C. A. LEJEUNE, BRITISH FILM CRITIC IN N. Y. TIMES.

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## Canoe in a Tidal Wave

RICHARD G. HUBLER

RICHARD G. HUBLER, a member of the Editorial Committee of The Screen Writer, is a well-known writer of novels, short stories and articles as well as screen plays.

THE POINT of the recent imbroglio over the British seventy-five per cent tax on American films is not, as it has been widely represented, taxation without representation. Nor is it Communism versus Democracy nor an invitation to dog eat dog.

The point is somewhat larger and more obscure. At the moment it is a pinprick but it can and probably will be driven home to the quillons in the next few years. It amounts to a repudiation not of American

big business but American art as exemplified in the motion picture. It is simply a straw in the big wind in which Vladimir Pozner held up a finger in the July, 1947, issue of *The Screen Writer*.

Consider the rest of the world as Hollywood rarely does. It has with the exception of the continents of the western hemisphere—Canada, the United States, South America—passed through unbelievable convulsion. The anguish continues. From it, as from any form

of suffering, will come new forms of life, government, and not least of all, art. They are already making their appearance. Hollywood, like a canoe in a tidal wave, continues its serene way.

The continent of Europe is largely closed already to the products of Hollywood as witness the fact that 85 per cent of the foreign market was in the island of England. Asia—China and India—are negligible markets. Russia does not want Hollywood and can, in fact, make better pictures for their purpose; nor by imitation do any of the countries in the iron orbit of the USSR. The others—such as France, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, and the like—are already producing motion pictures that in quality far outshine anything in this country. As long as *Enfants des Paradis* and *Torment* are examples of French and Swedish art and *Great Expectations* and *Odd Man Out* are exhibits of the English, Hollywood, to me, seems even more shabby than its usual self. The only way in which we excel is the way of mass production: we can produce more motion pictures faster. There is no regard to quality in the five-hundred-a-year schedule beyond a choice few.

To anyone who knows the character of Sir Stafford Cripps, the argument in London probably went in this fashion: "The films in Hollywood are not only taking needed dollars out of England; they are also causing a certain dry rot in our national character which we can afford even less than the dollar drain. In addition, we have our own industry which has proved itself, if not in mass, certainly individually. Let the people see our own product, occasional as it is, rather than merely dope themselves with Hollywood."

Such reasoning is in close harmony with the ascetic character of many of the Laborite leaders.

IT MAY be that that most happy thing, a realignment of values, is coming back to humanity as a whole. A perspective is being gained which was never held before. Involved in it is a change in the whole aspect of life, a turn toward the real and simple and profound—and in this shift Hollywood will find itself utterly inadequate. Representing a world that was never made, living in a realm of "pure entertainment" (as if such a thing could exist), Hollywood has no defenses against the direct attack.

This is no brief for any control over art or the free exchange of art between countries. Any restrictions imposed are evil in the extreme. But can any person working in Hollywood deny the restrictions that are placed on motion pictures by agencies from the Motion Picture Producers Association down to the individual producer? Is it possible to ignore that "freedom of the screen" is a phrase that is ludicrous in its application? Can it be denied that the single objective of Hollywood during all its history has been to make money, excluding all else?

It is easy to predict that the cloture imposed by England via taxation is only a symptom of artistic recovery throughout the world. It is easy to say that in the near future the most of the countries will close their markets to the Hollywood product as it is now known. In such a quandary, we can only develop markets in South America and build up our own. But our own is saturated, according to the polls, below the age of thirty-five. To pull in the elders, in a country where the preponderance of age is leaning toward forty, films must almost certainly be more adult.

Hollywood must be more adult to keep its foreign market, to enlarge its home market. The conclusion is that Hollywood must be more adult in order to keep alive.

## Mrs. Miniver's Sleigh Ride

GUY MORGAN

GUY MORGAN is a British writer and Honorable Secretary of the Screen Writers' Association of London. He has contributed frequently to this magazine.

**B**EHIND the golden curtain performers, management, and backers, vociferously discuss the outcome of a front-office poker game, where Mrs. Miniver (who was thought to be sitting pretty with

four aces) has just been raised a cool £13,000,000, three quarters of her year's dress allowance, by a penniless dude from Britain.

Mrs. Miniver's poker school is a tough one, and



the players she is sitting in with are international gamblers. The joker unexpectedly discovered in his hand by Dr. Dalton is the fact that an ad valorem Customs Duty on the estimated earnings of foreign films does not break the terms of the U. S. Loan Agreement, though any form of direct taxation or freezing of earnings would do so.

It is doubtful whether Mr. Eric Johnston, Hollywood's plenipotentiary poker expert, even suspected that this card was in the carefully-stacked deck. Hence the surprise of the players when Dr. Dalton quietly turned up Statutory Rule and Order, 1947—Customs Additional Duties (No. 2), raising the ante on foreign films from 5d. a foot to 300% ad valorem. Mrs. Miniver, indeed, has threatened to throw in her hand and leave the table.

And the most ominous thing amid all the shouting is the utter equanimity of the British cinema audience of 30 millions a week, at the threat of never seeing *Forever Amber* or *Scudda Hey! Scudda Ho!*

According to Board of Trade returns, Britain produced 107 long films and 195 short films (totalling 857,626 feet) during the year ended March 31st, 1947: imports of foreign films totalled 367 long and 386 short films (3,042,474 feet). British long films occupied 26.94 per cent of feature screen-time, an increase of only five per cent on the previous year. It must also be remembered that a considerable proportion of British films classified as "long" were three-and-a-half-reel "featurettes" of semi-documentary type.

According to a survey undertaken by the *Kinematograph Weekly* there are at present twenty-six major features in production in British studios. Calculating on an average of twelve weeks per film, and adding a small number of second features from smaller studios, their estimate of British production in the next twelve months is eighty full-length features. The estimate of the Association of Cine Technicians (with a Government backed production drive) is 150 full-length features, but even this generous estimate would not fill more than thirty-five per cent of British screen time.

The average British feature film today costs £150,000 to £200,000 and takes twelve weeks on the studio floor. Films in the double-A category, such as Sir Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet*, may cost up to £500,000 and take thirty-six weeks in production. The economic figure for recovery of production costs in the British market alone is, according to Mr. Herbert Wilcox, £150,000.

The Cinema Exhibitors Association, which takes £47,000,000 a year less tax at the box office from showing American films gloomily predicts strangulation of 4,500 cinemas within a year by a sterile diet of re-issues and documentaries.

The British Film Producers Association is cautious,

but admits it would take at least two to three years for Britain to balance her production budget. Sir Alexander Korda considers the tax "a shocking blow." It obviously hits our big films as hard as it hits your independents.

British Documentary Film Producers alone see a silver lining.

Only the public is indifferent. They believe that tax or no tax, Hollywood will still send their best films, arguing that no business man would deny himself a 25% profit because he couldn't get 75%. They point out that Hollywood already sends films to some European countries without any dollar return, even at cost to themselves. In 1914 Britain smoked Turkish cigarettes; in 1915 Britain smoked Virginian; in less than that time Britain could lose all interest in the queens and knaves in Mrs. Miniver's hand.

AS IT is hardly likely that the Government intends to hamstring an industry that contributes £43,000,000 a year to internal revenue from the Entertainment Tax, or even to nullify Mr. Rank's efforts to export so cheap a raw material as talent, it is reasonable to assume that some ulterior settlement is aimed at, part-tax, part-freeze is the general guess.

The British Screenwriter's Association has always recommended, at such times when recommendations were officially invited, that American films should pay income tax in this country, but with the corollary that part, at least, of the proceeds should be utilized to encourage independent British production. For contrary to popular belief the independent producer here has never received the slightest Government support, financial or otherwise, the only people encouraged to make British films under successive Films Acts being the American companies in fulfillment of compulsory Quota, and the Big Cinema Combines.

New studios and new equipment are long-term measures. Drastic reduction in film budgets and production schedules here would be inevitable as an interim measure to spread existing facilities further.

Many fear that cheaper British pictures would mean a return to the bad old days of perfunctory "quickie" production, and the abandonment of our new found standards. But expense has never been a guarantee of quality, nor do I think we would retreat from the tradition of better films so easily. Against this the writer is the first line of defense.

Reduction in overheads would not materially affect the writer. Story costs in theory (though seldom in practice here) amount to only ten per cent of a film's budget; and if cheaper pictures mean fewer writers engaged on the same subject, one of our aims at least will have been achieved.

The British film industry is at present out of balance, the majority of British production companies concentrating on the making of a few double-A films only. Our job is now to make A-films on B-budgets.

The B-picture is the training-ground of writers, directors, and technicians, the forcing-ground of talent, and the testing-ground of new ideas. The producer of double-A pictures only cannot afford to experiment; he can rarely even afford the risk of an original story written specially for the screen.

At present the British film industry is short of efficient screenwriters and technicians. The majority of

those employed today learned their craft in the days of cheaper and quicker pictures at Gaumont-British and B. I. P.

It is one of the most discouraging factors in British film production today that there is little or no training or encouragement for the writer and technician of the future.

But perhaps the most one can safely say in the presence of so many imponderable factors is that no amount of sudden shocks or injections will infuse increased productivity into British films as surely as a pledge of steady long-term planning.

*For years every Hollywood producer, with his hand on his heart, has solemnly declared that there is no barrier to the distribution of British films in America . . . yet the fact remains that British films have never had anything approaching a fair showing in America.*

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF CINE-TECHNICIANS.

*Our industry must see the domestic market is made as self-sufficient as possible. Moreover, we should continue to welcome British pictures as we welcome the films of every nation, so that we may know the world as we want the world to know us.*

SAMUEL GOLDWYN.

## How to Keep a Foreign Market

HOWARD KOCH

*SWG member Howard Koch, a previous contributor to The Screen Writer, is one of America's best known writers for the stage and screen and an Academy award winner in the motion picture field.*

**A**S a writer who has been through a half dozen Hollywood "crises" in the past seven years, I have come to regard them with skepticism.

It is my present guess that even the roar of the British lion will turn out, on closer inspection, to be no more than the bleating of a lamb that has lost most of its wool and fears another shearing. The seventy-five percent tax on our films is, in my opinion, a feeble protest not against the picture industry so much as against the rising tide of economic domination.

Probably it isn't even meant to be taken seriously and will soon be compromised or rescinded—a small tactical move in the vast chess game of international politics.

What can we do—members of the Screen Writers Guild? To believe we can do anything directly would

be to indulge ourselves with wishful thinking. Why, we're not even in that game. Bigger hands than ours make those moves—and for stakes larger than we care to imagine.

However, there is one faith I think we can act upon realistically. A good picture, like a good man, is hard to keep down. Eventually it is quite certain to penetrate whatever artificial barriers are erected against it.

No political chicanery has yet been devised to keep people permanently isolated from each other. They have always found and will find a means of communication. The important thing is to have something of value to communicate.

In the final analysis the best way to keep a foreign market—or any market—is to deserve it.



## What's Ahead for Hollywood?

*The following report, written by Robert Shaw, SWG director of publications, has been compiled from the results of research done by members of the Editorial Committee into various phases of the current foreign market situation. It includes a round-up of ideas, opinions and facts gleaned by Committee members around the studios in the last few weeks and reported to The Screen Writer office.*

A PUBLIC opinion poll in England the other day put this question to a cross-section of the British film audience: "Do you think British films since 1939 have got better, got worse, or not changed?" The result: got better, 96 per cent; got worse, 1 per cent; not changed, 3 per cent.

The same question was applied to the same people about Hollywood films, with this result: got better, 26 per cent; got worse, 18 per cent; not changed since 1939, 56 per cent.

Perhaps an American evaluation check of Hollywood films might produce a similar result. In a way, to the rest of the world, Hollywood seems a little like Bret Harte's San Francisco—serene, indifferent to fate, changeless by its Golden Gate. As a saturnine critic remarked, Hollywood remains timeless in its routines; it is only the world that changes. And there is that other weary wise-crack: "In these prosperous times even a good picture can make money!"

But the U. S. film industry was badly jarred by the British tax action. There was general awareness of the importance of Britain's 48,000,000 people and 6000 theatres as a market for our films. No longer was Hollywood serene, indifferent, changeless; the golden gate receipts tide showed signs of a disastrous ebb.

Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America, voiced industry reaction by saying: "If the British don't want American pictures that is

one thing; if they do they shouldn't expect to get a dollar's worth of films for 25 cents." The British response to this was: "We don't necessarily want the present type of American pictures, and we feel that you have been asking us to pay a dollar for 25 cents worth of films."

In several variations the statement was made that the British tax and the increasing French resistance to our films represented a conspiracy of the leftist British and French governments, possibly in league with the Kremlin, to keep American films and their portrayal of our way of life off foreign screens.

Sam Wood, a Hollywood director, hit the front pages of the trade and commercial press with a statement that the way to meet the slash in foreign income was to slash Hollywood payrolls. He later amended this.

One day there was a screaming banner line: "FILM INDIES SEE PLOT IN BRITISH TAX." The story was that some independent film producers professed to believe the situation resulted from a diabolical plan hatched by interlocking American and British movie capital to make a freeze-squeeze play against the independents and force them out of business. It was reasoned that the 75 per cent ad valorem tax would be modified to a temporary freeze of American film profits in Britain, and that while the major U. S. producing companies with their financial reserves could take this in stride, the independent producers operating on a capital shoestring would be ruined by it. That may have been pure hysteria, but certainly the independents are far more vulnerable than the majors to the taxing or freezing of profits.

An almost immediate reaction to the British tax announcement was the firing or laying off of hundreds of skilled workers and experienced executives in many studios. A breakdown of the reports in the trade press and from the lots indicates that the number of motion picture employees fired or on lay-

off as the result of current foreign market fears is around 3000.

Probably the most extreme reaction to the British tax announcement was the angry statement from the motion picture producers that they would boycott the British market. "No Film Bundles For Britain," shrilled *Daily Variety*. And some producers and their many subsidiary exhibitors talked loudly about reprisal against British films in the U. S. Since American films gross around \$450,000,000 a year in Great Britain and British films take about \$12,000,000 a year from the American box office, this retaliatory measure might result in more harm than benefit.

## 2

**F**ORTUNATELY the overheated tempers and angry roars are subsiding now. Calmness and realism are regaining control of the situation on both sides of the Atlantic. We are beginning to recognize more clearly some of the grim economic facts of a world shattered by two wars, and to see in better perspective that our U. S. is a lucky island in a sea of devastation and change. Where they might be bitter and harsh, the British are hopeful and even understanding when they speak of our Hollywood problems which after all are a microcosm in the struggle of a world for sanity and survival. Prime Minister Attlee holds out encouragement for some early amelioration of the British tax on American film profits reaped in Britain and on the big board U. S. film stock quotations fluctuate in response to his words.

Here in Hollywood other voices appraise the situation without anger or shrillness. N. Peter Rathvon, president of RKO, served the dignity of his industry well with his statement that neither studio personnel nor the quality of pictures on his lot would be sacrificed as the result of the situation precipitated by the British tax move. He indulged in no fatuous optimism. He predicted that no matter how the British action is compromised in the near future, there will be no early recovery of American film profits in that market. He foresaw that other nations would follow the English lead—a prophecy that already has been fulfilled—and that there would be a total net revenue decline of at least 30 per cent as the result of shrinking foreign markets. He spoke of the necessity for economy—the kind that is achieved by administrative efficiency and carefully prepared production schedules, not the ruinous panic-economy that throws to the wolves the experienced technical, executive and creative workers who form with their know-how the basic capital of Hollywood motion picture production.

Samuel Goldwyn, while deploring the British action

and hoping for an adjustment, yet pointed out that Britain at present simply has no dollars to spare. He said: "The meaning is clear. Producers will hereafter have to depend on the domestic market alone for a return of their costs and a profit commensurate with the value of their pictures. This leaves them with two alternatives: to produce cheap pictures with a minimum of time, money and talent, or to continue to gamble fortunes in the attempt to make really fine films. I believe most of us will take that gamble, for without first-rate pictures the entire industry is doomed."

Nobody can really believe that an industry with the finest resources of talent and technique and the greatest home market in the world is doomed. Everybody gives at least lip service to the platitude that there is nothing wrong with the film business that better pictures cannot cure. Nevertheless, the foreign market situation is serious, if not desperate—and for some segments of the industry it is undoubtedly desperate. What are the facts?

*Foreign Market Outlook.* Most of the studio international experts believe the situation may get considerably worse before it gets much better. Former Secretary of State James Byrnes, now an adviser of the Motion Picture Association, said in Hollywood the other day that we must face the permanent loss of at least two-thirds of our foreign market. Restrictive barriers against American films are being erected in many nations. This may be in part ideological, as Mr. Byrnes intimated. It is also economic—the protective tariff game learned from us by nations trying to nurture recrudescing film industries.

Eric Johnston said at the start of the British tax move that it might start a chain reaction, with other nations putting up barricades against Hollywood pictures. He is being proved right. Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and Singapore and the Straits Settlements have since acted to freeze or tax American film profits in their areas. French Finance Minister Robert Schuman has announced the imminence of serious tax and dollar blocking measures against American films in France, and this action may now be in effect. Brazil, Mexico, Canada, South Africa, Sweden, Italy and Egypt are other nations that have announced plans to take large tax bites out of Hollywood film income.

Other nations do not act this way out of enmity or perversity. They do not act this way solely to protect their own film industries, or because their people are tired of so many Hollywood films that seem more than ever remote from their common experience. There are signs of a foreign revolt against some kinds of Hollywood films (see report of SWG Special Program



Committee's International Film Forum in the April, 1947, issue of *The Screen Writer*) but this probably is not the dominant factor. The big fact is that these nations do not have the dollars to pay for Hollywood movies. Today the United States is the great "have" nation, made prosperous rather than impoverished by war, and from the "have not" nations it pulls their scanty supply of dollars as a giant magnet attracts iron filings from the perimeter of its field.

These nations prefer using their dwindling dollars or dollar credits in future loans for things they have to have. When the choice is between bread and Bergman, they choose bread. That is what is happening to the foreign film market.

*Great Britain and France.* These nations have represented almost 90 per cent of the United States' foreign film market. So it is important to have no illusions about their position. Some day Hollywood may again have free access to their film markets. But that day is not just around the corner.

Our films have been occupying more than 80 per cent of playing time in British motion picture theatres, 70 per cent in French theatres, as well as more than 60 per cent of the playing time in other nations of western Europe and in Australia, South Africa, India, Egypt and Canada.

Great Britain, our major market with its 6,000 film theatres, had been paying for our pictures out of the \$3,750,000,000 American loan. Then three things happened: U. S. price controls were scrapped, the inflation spiral began, and a large part of the buying power of Britain's borrowed dollars went down the drain. Second, American exports swelled until they reached the unprecedented annual rate of 19.6 billion dollars, while imports were only 7.6 billion dollars, thus sharpening tremendously the world demand for dollars. Third, the convertibility clause, inserted like a time bomb in the loan agreement signed by Britain, clicked into action with an explosive result. The British economy became a mere counter for the converting of soft English sterling into hard American dollars. Britain's dollar balance began to shrink at the rate of \$75,000,000 a week. It is now reaching the vanishing point. The English have stopped spending dollars for American food, and their rations have dropped below the bitter standards of 1941. The nation that once chose bullets before butter and a shameful peace will now probably choose food before foreign films.

In France, our second greatest foreign market, the Blum-Byrnes agreement chickens are coming home to roost. SWG member Edward Eliscu reports from Paris in this issue of *The Screen Writer* that French production is down 40 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Eliscu, Henry Myers and Albert Lewin in their joint letter in the September *Screen Writer* described a parade of French motion picture employes carrying placards, "Down With the Blum-Byrnes Agreement!" That agreement, allotting 16 weeks of playing time to French films in French theatres, and opening up 36 weeks of playing time to American films, undoubtedly created a favorable temporary market for Hollywood. But it also created intense resentment. Our films, entering the French market already paid for from home exhibition, are able to undercut film rental rates and drive French and other films off the French screens. That may not have been altogether wise.

Mr. Henri Jeanson, president of the French Screen Writers Syndicate, asks: "Suppose someone were to come to you in America and say: 'The French, who at home boycott you and deny you playing time, have decided that henceforth your American films may be shown in your American theatres only four weeks out of 13.' What would you Americans say? What would your reaction be?"

In all likelihood it would be a serious reaction and not wholesome for the future of French films in the American market. In the long run the Blum-Byrnes agreement will not be good for the future of American films in the French market. Add to that the fact that the U.S. loan to France is expiring from the same conditions affecting the British loan, and the immediate outlook for our films in France is somewhat clouded.

### 3

**I**F this appraisal is realistic, it is not necessarily pessimistic. The foreign market outlook is not rosy. But neither is it altogether black. Whether or not the British ease the 75 per cent tax bite, it seems a pretty safe bet that American pictures will continue to be exported to England. That would be too important a vacuum for us to create and allow to be refilled by English and European producers, while 48,000,000 British fans forgot about Hollywood. If our films continue to be exhibited in England, and even if the 75 per cent tax stands, the Hollywood industry will still draw a profit of around \$15,000,000 a year from the British gross. Foreign market profits in other nations, while certain to be less lush, will still enable the industry to skim off a respectable amount of gravy.

The most recent available Department of Commerce reports show that the American motion picture industry showed a profit of \$316,000,000 in 1946 before federal taxes, and an estimated \$100,000,000 of this came from the foreign market. After payment of all taxes a clear

<sup>1</sup> See page 46.

\$190,000,000 remained. Out of this the motion picture companies paid \$74,000,000 in dividends, and laid aside a nice rainy day fund of \$116,000,000—enough to cushion the worst impact of the British tax for several years.

Seven major companies in 1946, five of them with theatre chains, showed a net profit of \$208,000,000 before taxes, and \$125,000,000 after taxes. The British action is variously figured to cause the U. S. film industry a loss of from \$40,000,000 to \$60,000,000. It could hardly cost these majors more than \$40,000,000 a year. On that basis in 1946, these companies would still have showed a profit of \$168,000,000 before federal taxes, and well over \$100,000,000 after taxes. It must be remembered that the U. S. treasury would share in the form of missing taxes some of the loss due to British taxes.

A serious decline in the domestic box office could of course change the picture for the worse. But the well-entrenched majors, with their financial reserve cushions, will probably continue to do reasonably well. For some other companies and the small independents, the going may be tougher. Consider the case of Universal, a producing and distributing company with no backlog of theatres and depending heavily on foreign revenue. Its 1946 gross was around \$54,000,000, including about \$25,000,000 from foreign sales. Its profit was \$8,194,000 before U. S. taxes. A large part of its profit came from British exhibition, and the British tax would have reduced its profit to about \$1,300,000. U. S. taxes would have taken about \$500,000 of that, leaving a net of approximately \$800,000 on a \$54,000,000 gross.

Of course in many cases there are undoubtedly hidden profits charged off in the form of unnecessary salaries, etc. But it is true that while the overall situation is far from desperate, the impact of the foreign market situation will hit the small companies with special and unjust force.

#### 4

FOR both majors and independents the problem is real. What is to be done about it? What's ahead for Hollywood?

There are many answers. Some are given in this section. George Bernard Shaw suggests through *The Screen Writer* that Hollywood adopt a higher morality. Dudley Nichols pleads for more integrity and better pictures.

*Our American Home Market.* Regardless of what happens to our foreign markets, we have in the U.S.A.

an untapped market richer than all others combined. Successful as the American film industry has been, from one important standpoint it has been a failure. It has failed to reach and interest a majority of the American people. The Gallup research institute experts estimate the weekly motion picture audience in the U. S. at about 50,000,000, and the audience potential at about 125,000,000. This means there are about 75,000,000 people in the country who are not regular patrons of the movies. A further breakdown puts at 50,000,000 the number of Americans able to enjoy motion pictures and who rarely see them. Even in the prosperous war years—"when even good pictures made money"—these 50,000,000 Americans stayed home. Apparently there were not enough pictures of the kind they wanted to see to attract them to the theatres and establish the movie habit.

These 50,000,000 Americans who rarely go to the movies form a larger and probably richer group than the total population of Great Britain. They represent a lost market which Hollywood might really worry about. They have passed judgment on our films—and maybe 50,000,000 Americans cannot be altogether wrong.

Dr. Gallup's learned researches disclose that after the age of 19 the American movie-going habit declines sharply, and after the age of 35 few Americans bother about seeing more than two or three pictures a year. So a large proportion of these 50,000,000 Americans who stay away from the theatres are undoubtedly in the older age group, and financially able to afford shows, if there were enough pictures to attract them and establish them in the habit.

*Better Stories.* Adult pictures are needed to attract the vast potential adult audience of America—and for that we need adult stories, not clichés and fairy tales. Probably American picture-goers are not much different intrinsically from their British counterparts—and of these C. A. Lejeune, the distinguished film critic of the London *Observer*, writes in the N. Y. *Times*: "British picture-goers today want adult films about people in whom they can believe; people who behave credibly and humanly in possible circumstances. They have come to the conclusion through their experience of recent years that Hollywood is functionally incapable of giving them that sort of picture. This may be true, or it may be false, but that is something that Hollywood has got to reckon with. . . . It is significant that the only Hollywood film to cut any swath over here in recent months—*The Best Years of Our Lives*—was made by a director, William Wyler, who had been close to the war and had spent a long enough



time in Europe to begin to understand our problems and tolerate our idiosyncrasies."

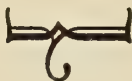
*Creative Freedom.* Better stories will be written and better pictures will be made when the people who create movies—especially the primary creators, the writers—are given a greater degree of control over their work and the selection of material. More responsibility for the creators, less irresponsibility and interference from the front office, would give to writers, directors, working producers, actors and technicians a sense of creative opportunity that would materialize at last the renaissance that always eludes Hollywood. It is this freedom of the creative people to select and work their material that has caused the remarkable qualitative upsurge in British production. The evidence of that is convincing.

The greater freedom enjoyed by the creative talent in the British and French film industries obviously has not been abused. And while it has imparted a definite qualitative lift, it has not resulted in an unbroken string of motion picture master-pieces. There are plenty of British turkeys. And there are many fine Hollywood films. The truth seems to be that in a mass entertainment industry-art, every production cannot be a work

of genius. But more control of material and an increased sense of responsibility on the part of creative workers would mean more great pictures, and infinitely more pictures that were mature rather than juvenile and honestly entertaining rather than imitatively cheap.

*Cooperation For Better Pictures.* On lots where even a foretaste of creative freedom and integrity has been evolved, there has been evident a vital resurgence of interest. High quality pictures have been made on incredibly low budgets—for example, *Crossfire* at RKO. Such pictures do not need foreign markets to make a profit. This is the true economy, without sacrifice of personnel or quality. A survey made recently in Hollywood and quoted in a trade magazine the other day showed this kind of cooperation could save at least \$100,000,000 a year, twice the loss in British revenue, and at the same time result in better pictures.

*Reciprocal Exhibition.* While the American market is open to foreign films in theory, it is all but closed to them in practice. Samuel Goldwyn suggests wisely that we welcome foreign films and see them, so that we may know the world as we want the world to know us. It is a good idea. It might do a lot to reopen foreign markets.



# Town Meeting Tonight!

PAUL TRIVERS

*SWG member PAUL TRIVERS has written for both the stage and screen. A former member of the SWG Editorial Committee, he wrote in the October, 1945, issue of The Screen Writer about another Town Meeting of the Air Hollywood program.*

THE occasion was America's Town Meeting of the Air. The subject was the old standby, with one word added, making it read, "Is There *Really* a Communist Threat in Hollywood?" As Mr. George V. Denny, Jr., founder and moderator, is fond of saying, Town Meeting "is a nationwide program carried by 226 stations of the American Broadcasting Company."

Originally the affirmative team, instead of Mrs. Lela Rogers and Senator Tenney, consisted of Hedda Hopper and Howard Emmett Rogers. But apparently Miss Hopper wished to name films containing Communist ideology, while Mr. Rogers felt, as he stated in a letter to the *Hollywood Reporter* on August 29th, "What one person might consider Communist propaganda, another person could interpret as a liberal expression of thought."

For Mr. Rogers, a writer whose zeal against Communism had brought him in the past as far out from the gates of Hollywood to combat it as Tarzana, to take such a stand was a refreshing occurrence. The only trouble was, after he and Miss Hopper withdrew from the program, Town Meeting was unable to find anyone to take their places. Then rumor spread that the producers had at last pointed out the folly of defending Capitalism by smearing their best money-making pictures, especially since audiences nowadays were none too eager to go to the movies anyhow.

This probably contained at least a germ of truth, for the affirmative was spurned, according to the *Hollywood Reporter*, by Sam Wood, Ronald Reagan, Barbara Stanwyck, Edward Arnold, and Robert Taylor. Even Adolphe Menjou refused, after having boasted to J. Parnell Thomas earlier in the summer that he had "read 250 books on Communism."

But Mrs. Rogers, mother of the actress, took to pinch-hitting like a cat takes to catnip. Opposite her and Senator Tenney, the only representative of Los Angeles County in the California State Senate, for the negative were Albert Dekker, the actor and former member of the State Assembly, and Emmet Lavery, playwright and president of the Screen Writers Guild.

With squads of police thronging the sidewalks outside and with posters of the local sponsor's product, Sparkletts Drinking Water, flanking her on the stage, Mrs. Rogers led off for the affirmative.

"How long has it been," she asked, "since you saw a member of the Congress of the United States shown on the screen as a trustworthy servant of the voters who elected him? How long has it been since you've seen on the screen an industrialist, a banker, a judge shown as anything else than a stinker?"

This deplorable state of affairs, the existence of which remained undocumented, Mrs. Rogers attributed to the "Communist party-liner," who fiendishly "corrupts non-political pictures, good pictures, human stories. He sticks in a character here, a line there, all designed to subtly destroy the faith of the American people in the institutions and principles that have made this country great—and kept it free!"

When his turn came to speak, Mr. Lavery for the negative endeavored to inject something less grandiloquent into the discussion. "Let's consider one fact about the making of motion pictures," he said. "It isn't like the making of a novel or a short story, where the author has control of every character and every word. In pictures it is different. From the moment a



story is bought until the moment it goes before the cameras, everybody and his brother are in the act—including the front office which has the first and the last word to say about everything. So if there were a conspiracy in Hollywood, it would have to start at the top; it just wouldn't have a chance at the bottom. First and last, this is a management problem at management level, and Mr. Dekker and I come here tonight to say that upon this issue we think management is above reproach. We think management is as sound as the dollar which it pursues so successfully."

SENATOR Tenney, throughout the remarks of his opponent, sat in a deep brown study. Many thoughts must have piled up in his mind, not the least of which perhaps was the realization that ten million people in every corner of the nation were listening to Mr. Lavery. As he stirred in his seat, perhaps he consoled himself with the reflection that his time would come. If he were thinking of national office, surely he must have recognized, with a little tingle, how helpful this appearance could be. Less likely was the possibility that he was contemplating the fate of that pioneer in his specialty, former Congressman Martin Dies, who, despite all his efforts, was not sufficiently appreciated and some time ago was put out to private business back home.

When the Senator at length reached the podium, he chose to indulge himself a little. Greeted with applause, he remarked, "I'm very happy to hear some Americans present." And the applause turned mostly to boos.

But habit is strong and the Senator flipped over the other side of the coin. "I notice we have a lot of comrades," he observed, moving his head fan-wise around the angered audience. "I might say to Mr. Lavery," he continued, "that the threat of Communism in Hollywood has been gaining momentum since 1930. It died to a whisper during the 22 months of the Hitler-Stalin pact. It became vigorous and menacing during the war, hiding behind our necessary military alliance with Soviet Russia."

From here on the Senator lavishly gave the world the benefit of his investigations, enumerating organizations and individuals that he had found "menacing." He included Mr. Dekker and Mr. Lavery, even making the accusation that "Mr. Dekker certainly has achieved a Marxian victory now and then by being a little more of a capitalist villain that the script demanded."

At one point, Senator paused in his cataloguing to praise the producers. "Most of them are loyal Americans, thank God! It is absurd to believe that they would conspire for the destruction of free enterprise, life,

liberty and the industry that brings them economic independence and dignity."

By the time the author of *Mexicali Rose* and *Red Fascism* was through, Mr. Dekker was more than ready. "There is a four-letter word I'd like to use in describing the content of Jack B. Tenney's offering," he said. "The word is fish—plain red herring. Anybody who disagrees with him, or Parnell Thomas, or Rankin, or Bilbo, is a 'party-liner'!"

Mr. Dekker concluded his opening remarks with, "For myself, I want every man and woman to be able to walk free in the sun and safe in the shadow. If we lead the way in the best American tradition other nations will follow us, and we need fear no one, no nation, ever."

In the period of, in the words of the moderator, "give and take" which followed, Mrs. Rogers was the first to comment. "Well, Mr. Lavery," she said rather sweetly, "you are in a position to do more to combat the accusation of the Communist threat to Hollywood than any other single individual. All you have to do is take advantage of one provision of the Taft-Hartley law, and have the officers and executive board of the Screen Writers Guild file affidavits attesting that they are not members of the Communist party. Do you intend to do this?"

Mr. Lavery replied: "I think the Taft-Hartley Bill is an unfortunate piece of legislation. But while it is on the statute books of our land, our Guild, like all guilds, will do its best to observe it even though we disagree with it, and even though many of our members work for its repeal. I am not a Communist. I think many officers in the Guild—many members—have no hesitation in coming forth and saying they are not Communists. Whether we file the declaration depends on whether the Guild comes within the meaning of the Taft-Hartley Act. Mrs. Rogers may not know the application does not apply unless you appear before the NLRB and wish the services of the National Labor Relations Board."

"Oh, but I do know!" rejoined Mrs. Rogers. "The A. F. of L. doesn't agree with the Taft-Hartley bill either, but it is going to sign that provision just to prove that it is not Communist-run." How Mrs. Rogers could be so sure was her secret. A few days later, the A. F. of L. Council decided not to sign.

In any case, the Senator was contented. He could scowl right in Mr. Lavery's face, all four participants now being gathered around the microphone. He asked Mr. Lavery pointblank what he planned to do about those members of the Guild whom the *Hollywood Reporter* last year asserted were Communists. "In the Screen Writers Guild," said Mr. Lavery, "as in most

guilds and unions, we do not have a political test for membership; we do not have a religious test for membership. I imagine that we do have a few Communists in our Guild——"

Senator Tenney exclaimed, "A few!"

Mr. Lavery continued, "We also have a lot of Republicans. We also have a lot of Democrats. I'll answer the Senator's question specifically. The reason that we don't throw the Communists out is the same reason that we don't throw the Republicans out. Under the prevailing decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, it is not seditious per se to be a member of the Communist party, any more than it is to be a member of the Republican party; and so we do not have a political test for membership in the Screen Writers' Guild."

The Senator's expression darkened. "Mr. Lavery, it seems to me you begged that question as bad as you did the other. Let me point this out to you, that it wasn't illegal either to belong to the German-American Bund before the shooting war started. It'll be the same thing when war starts with Russia. Let me just point out to you——" Here rising boos interrupted the Senator for a few moments.

MR. Dekker, a bit later, drew laughter and applause when Mr. Lavery inquired if it was common practice in the California State Legislature for the legislators to take state reports and sell them in a pretty binding to the taxpayers at \$8.75, such as Senator Tenney had recently done with his *Red Fascism*. Mr. Dekker replied, "No, this is not a practice. However, I consider it rather contemptible. But, however, what can a man do who only gets \$1200 a year representing 45 per cent of the people of California? He's got to make a living somehow—somehow!"

It was during the question period from the floor that Senator Tenney seemed most keenly aware of the ten million radio listeners. He became authoritative, alert, aggressive. He was in fine fettle. He bounced to and from the microphone answering questions directed at Mrs. Rogers as well as those directed at his opponents and himself. After each rapier-like thrust, he moved away, nodding satisfiedly.

On one occasion it looked like Mr. Dekker would have to take the microphone in his arms to keep the Senator from it. He had been asked: "Is the fuss about Communism in Hollywood part of a drive to cover up reactionary tendencies which are often disguised by calling them Americanisms?"

Perhaps Senator Tenney doubted that the former Assemblyman would know the answer to a question

like that. However, Mr. Dekker snapped, "You know, we're not in one of your hearings now. Everybody gets a chance here."

It was Mrs. Rogers, on another occasion, who actually lost a fine question to the eager Senator. A housewife had asked her: "In as concrete and definitive a fashion as possible, what constitutes a Communist front organization?"

Muttering "this is a technical matter," the Senator wedged himself in between Mrs. Rogers and the microphone. All Mrs. Rogers could do was look up at him trustingly.

Later on, with the help of the moderator, she was given the opportunity to reply to the following: "Don't you think the American people have enough sense to decide whether a picture is actually subversive and not to be influenced by it?"

And Mrs. Rogers said: "Yes, dear, in the main I think they do. But mostly, I think that the subtlety of the propaganda is so placed that it is like the dripping of the water that wears away the stone."

Toward the end of the program, Mr. Lavery was asked: "Do you not agree that we ought to strive to eradicate the little thieves of Communism, low minimum wages, slums, limited civil and political rights of Negroes?"

To which Mr. Lavery replied: "I do believe very much that the way to fight Communism is to offer a better life. I agree with Emmett John Hughes in his book on Spain, that a truly free democratic society has nothing to fear from Communism if its house is in order. The more we cry Communism when there is no Communism, the more we advertise to the world that we are a vulnerable society. I believe very definitely that if we put our house in order, we have nothing to fear from Communism, except the fear of Communism."

When Senator Tenney took the microphone for his summation, he seemed to be under the impression that he had not yet made his position clear. For the benefit of those who might not have understood him, he declared, "It should be obvious to everyone, after listening to Mr. Lavery and Mr. Dekker on this program, that Communism in Hollywood is real and sinister."

Perhaps, though, the affirmative's point of view was best expressed by Mrs. Rogers in her answer to the question, "If the survival of democracy cannot be entrusted to people in Hollywood, who are among the most enlightened in the world, where then can it live?"

Mrs. Rogers replied: "But the teachers of democracy can be entrusted to the people of Hollywood. As you notice, I'm up here now, dear."



# Love In Hopewell

DAVID CHANDLER

DAVID CHANDLER, a member of SWG and a contract writer at a major studio, here presents in a somewhat different form another case study of audience research techniques in the field of the literary arts.

*The scene is Wynbrook Acres, near Hopewell, N. J., where a "New Entertainment Workshop," designed to "make life a great deal easier and more profitable for the creative writer" has been established by Albert E. Sindlinger, a former executive vice-president of George Gallup's Audience Research Institute. A lank, tweedy individual, the deep purple under his eyes, the typewriter ribbon stains on his nose, his habit of glancing furtively about him, betraying his mode of living, enters. He carries a frayed copy of the Drama Section of the New York Times of April 6, 1947, folded neatly to page 5. He is met by an executive-type man in a swallow-tail coat, pin-stripe trousers, Ascot tie and a vast pearl stickpin. This would be, for purposes of our little fiction, a character we might call Frank Stanhope, undoubtedly a Doctor of Education from Teachers' College. As the tweedy man enters, Stanhope hurriedly takes out a bulging wallet, puts it in a desk drawer, locks the drawer securely. From his mouth he takes a thermometer, reads it approvingly. He looks up.*

STANHOPE

Come in, Sludge. We've been waiting for you.

*(Sludge enters tentatively, looking behind him as though he is expecting to be kicked by a producer, editor or receptionist.)*

No need for temperament or frustration here, Sludge. Our job is only to "aid writers . . . assure the greatest possible financial reward . . . and to help producers reduce their costs by getting the most out of plays, novels and original film scenarios."

SLUDGE

Thank you.

STANHOPE

Nothing, man. That's what the New Entertainment Workshop is here for. Our idea is to make our pre-sampling methods available to authors as well as producers.

SLUDGE

Anything you say, sir.

STANHOPE

*(picking up and carelessly tossing a MS on his desk)*

Well Sludge, we've gone to work on your book. . . .  
*(Sludge looks eagerly at his host; Stanhope shakes his head dubiously, then smiles aggressively, pitches in)*  
There was a problem.

SLUDGE

It was something I had to say. The problems of our times, people, nuclear—

STANHOPE *(unhearing)*

The title, man. The title.

SLUDGE

You don't like *Tanqueray Towers*?

STANHOPE

It wasn't a question of liking or not, Sludge . . . I say, do stop quivering and sit down.

*(He points out a chair. Sludge sits on the edge of it, gingerly, timidly)*

Here we do things scientifically. We tried a sampling on your title—frankly, we found it didn't hold much interest. We'd had that experience before, with Barry Benefield's *Eddie and the Archangel Mike*. The poor publishers could only dispose of fourteen thousand copies and there was no sale to the movies. But now we've changed the title to *Texas, Heaven and Brooklyn*—and there's no telling where the book will go.

SLUDGE *(tentatively)*

Suppose I called it *Love in Tanqueray Towers*?

STANHOPE *(shaking his head)*

No. The title for your book is *California, Paradise and Miami*. See the interest? Now it too can go places, producers will be calling at all hours.

*(Waving his hand airily)*

Maybe we can insert the word penicillin and get it in the Reader's Digest. . . .

SLUDGE

Then it's only a matter of the title. . . .

STANHOPE

No, no, man. That was just the beginning. We took your synopsis and condensed *that*. This we sent out to our group of professional readers—college pro-

fessors, writers, critics, lawyers, doctors, actors—to determine its general interest values.

SLUDGE

It seems a lot of trouble for a little story about a boy and girl.

STANHOPE

That wasn't all. We made additional synopses of varying lengths, slanted from different angles, comedy, melodrama and so on and from this we've selected the most favorable reactions as the one for you to follow. Do you know what appealed most to our audiences in *Tanqueray*—oops, *California, Paradise and Miami*?

SLUDGE

The love story? The twist where she doesn't know his father owns the drug store?

STANHOPE

Not at all. A character called Edgar Flaxhead, who brings the message in Chapter Four.

SLUDGE

But he's only a Western Union boy.

STANHOPE

Only, you say! Do you know how many people began life as Western Union boys?

*(Points to a pile of statistics)*

We have documentary proof of that. Besides this fellow Flaxhead, there's an air of mystery about him. A lady in Augusta found him "intriguing." Who is he, where'd he come from when he enters with the telegram, how does he feel about marlin fishing?—you can't take a fascinating character like that and drop him cold.

SLUDGE

Oh, well, I guess I can build him up a little.

STANHOPE

That's the right approach. Scientific. Of course that will mean you've got to change the girl—she's got to be unsure now—how does she know but what Flaxhead's father doesn't own Western Union?

*(Sludge begins nervously to fidget in his chair, then he rises slightly, anger flickering in his eyes)*

SLUDGE *(hotly)*

But this is crazy. You're just offering me little doo-hickies on a graph as an excuse. . . .

*(Stanhope fixes him steadily with a cold stare; Sludge, defeated, sinks back in his chair)*

STANHOPE

You were saying?

SLUDGE *(in a whisper)*

I'm sorry. I've been working on screenplays so long I'm a little jumpy.

STANHOPE

Emotional, that's what you are. We'll have to get your nerve reactions and neurones charted on our in-

struments. But a few weeks in Wynbrook Acres will fix you up fine. You'll have a locale attractive and conducive to creative writers.

SLUDGE

My wife says I won't work anywhere. I've tried Paris, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, the Kashmir hills—I always find an excuse.

STANHOPE *(icily)*

In Hopewell, New Jersey, everyone works.

SLUDGE *(dreamily)*

I hope so.

STANHOPE

*(swiftly, in a monotone, in which he repeats whole phrases and sentences ad libitum)*

Now, instead of making the boy an Alabaman, he ought to be a Canadian. Our people are very interested in Canada, what with travel restrictions to Europe and all. And the place where they meet— not a drug store. There's no interest in drug stores. We might make it a plastics factory—keep it topical, or a streptomycin lab. Never mind the love story—our group in Madison, Wisconsin liked the melodrama. They thought the part where the boy searches in the ice cream case for the tutti-frutti might be expanded into a search for the missing Mynheer Diamond. That would mean having to go to England, but that would be fine atmosphere, people want to know about England today. Good for the films too, a chance for some low-key lighting stuff, fog, steamers arriving at midnight, the wail of whistles, foghorns. . . .

*(In the middle of this speech, Stanhope's VOICE begins to fade, but it goes on and on and Sludge's face begins to show first a restlessness overcoming him, then a kind of hypnosis, his head beginning to spin, as though he has lost contact with reality and has no physical being. He stirs fitfully, but as the VOICE continues, reality dissolves, dissolves . . .)*

STANHOPE

Flaxhead, unaware that the boy has threatened the girl, seizes Webley. At the same time the old country doctor is hitching his wagon . . .

*(Stanhope continues to speak, repeating phrases, motifs, but the now non-physical Sludge makes one last effort to speak, his VOICE COMING OVER Stanhope's, as the latter drones on)*

SLUDGE

But this is different! It's only more scientific. Instead of Variety and the latest news about B. O socko in Mpls and Donald Gordon and Bennett Cerf—you're offering little electric impulses—

*(Things grow hazy, utterly lost now for Sludge.)*



## THE SCREEN WRITER

*As Sludge has spoken, Stanhope has pressed a button; two large men materialize out of thin air, they swiftly pin Sludge's arms behind him. He shrieks painfully as they lift him to his feet)*

STANHOPE

Good.

*(to the large men)*

Throw him in the dungeon. The one facing the wisteria.

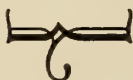
*(He walks up to Sludge, now limp, unconscious, his*

*ankles dragging on the floor; a sweet smile crosses Stanhope's face and he puts his hand under the head of the unconscious Sludge and steadies the limp head for a moment)*

Please understand that "we do not want to find our ideas colored by the pressure of the production line."

*(He lets the loose head fall forward. He nods briefly. The large men drag the inert Sludge out the door. As the door shuts a dreadful shrieking knifes the air.)*

FADE OUT



## Another Hollywood Air Forum

Theodore Granik's *American Forum of the Air* on Tuesday (26) jumped the gun by a week on George Denny's *Town Meeting* debate on alleged infiltration of Communist influences on Hollywood films. Granik corralled a group of New York film critics, including Eileen Creelman of the Sun, and Terry Ramsaye of the Motion Picture Herald, who were pretty sure of an existing Red Menace; and Irene Thirer, of the Post, and Jack McManus, of PM, who were on the opposite side of the table.

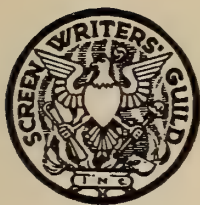
Assuming that the first requisite of any debate is equal representation, Granik's forum failed to come up with a debate. Either McManus' words and facts completely floored his opponents, or else they thought they could get by with a free ride on the name-calling train. Always it was McManus who called a halt and asked for one concrete incident to illustrate the carefully-worded innuendos. He begged, but not one was forthcoming. Actually, McManus and not Granik became the moderator, trying to keep the discussion factual and positive and within the bounds of the question under discussion.

Miss Creelman took the floor with her prejudices fully formed. She just had feelings, and they were deep ones. Ramsaye thought it was beneath his dignity to argue the point. Miss Thirer merely echoed her teammate because McManus was so right and positive, and so able to defend his viewpoint in showing up his opponents' lack of positive facts that it was foolish to attempt to take the floor from him.

McManus was in there swinging hard for the rights of Hollywood to enjoy the same freedom of speech and expression that is accorded by the Constitution to the other arts and communications media. But he also wanted the name callers to put up or shut up and he couldn't get to first base.

Rose

— N. Y. VARIETY.



## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

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## E D I T O R I A L

WHO is loyal to America? What is this new loyalty? All writers who respect their profession should ask these questions. We should give thought to the sharpening attempts of legislative committees and those who use them to put into uniform the expression of opinion. For writers are the first to feel these pressures against the civil liberties of all Americans.

Those who would stifle the interplay of opinion in a free democracy recognize that writers as a group are the most articulate custodians of the traditions of tolerance, democracy, and the freedom not to conform. So it is important that we examine with all possible clarity, and answer with all the intelligence and courage we can muster, these questions: *What is the standard of this new loyalty? Is it conformity: the blind or forced acceptance of the political and economic opinions of a few ultra-conservative manufacturers, newspaper owners and politicians?*

These are poignant questions today. They are coming home with swift insistence to Americans loyal to the America of Jefferson and Lincoln, of Emerson and Thoreau, of Roosevelt and Willkie.

It is not a passing fancy that caused the Los Angeles County Supervisors to classify as dubious if not subversive the Authors' League of America, with which the Screen Writers' Guild is affiliated. It is not personal idiosyncrasy that causes Jack B. Tenney to smear constantly our Guild, other writer organizations and individual writers. It is not playful whimsy that causes the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals to brand as



disloyal films that give dramatic substance to an idea, that portray the common good as more important than private gain. It is not idle malice that makes Mr. Hearst of San Simeon crusade against books and writers, and makes Col. McCormick of Chicago say: "Scenario writers, most playwrights and many book publishers are thoroughly disloyal to our country." Nor, to bracket a pigmy with some giants, is it altogether habit that makes Mr. W. R. Wilkerson of Hollywood characterize the Guild as composed of disloyal bums and hacks, and joust eternally against all save the few members who may agree with him.

THESE questions of who is loyal and what is loyalty must be asked and answered. Great Americans were not afraid to deal with them in the past—Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin faced them when they rebelled against tyranny. Tom Paine, Henry Thoreau, Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips grappled with them. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes met them with patriotic insight and courage, loyal to all that America has meant and must mean.

The United States Supreme Court has met them often, and it has always found the same answers.

Henry Steele Commager, the distinguished historian-philosopher, points out in a current *Harper's Magazine* article that the gist of the "loyalty tests" now being imposed is loyalty to the particular body of economic practices lumped under the heading of "private enterprise."

Dr. Commager quotes a historic decision of the Supreme Court rejecting the concept that belief or disbelief in any economic system can be considered a test of American loyalty. In the *Schneiderman* case the Court ruled:

*"Throughout our history many sincere people whose attachment to the general constitutional scheme cannot be questioned have, for various and even divergent reasons, urged differing degrees of governmental ownership and control of natural resources, basic means of production, and banks and the media of exchange, either with or without compensations. And something once regarded as a species of private property was abolished without compensating the owners when the institution of slavery was forbidden. Can it be said that the author of the Emancipation Proclamation and the supporters of the Thirteenth Amendment were not attached to the Constitution?"*

And again, in the *Barnette* case of 1943, concerned with the empty gesture of patriotism required by the self-appointed watch-dogs of Americanism, the Supreme Court ruled:

*"If there is any fixed star in our Constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. If there are any circumstances which permit an exception they do not now occur to us. . . . Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters. Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard."*

AS this drive toward un-American uniformity and policed opinion mounts, as the rodomontade of the Thomas Committee approaches a climax of hysteria, the voices of our real America are raised to warn of this planned coup d'état against American liberty. Henry Steele Commager's warning will be heard. O. John Rogge, former Assistant Attorney-General of the United States, told a mass meeting in Chicago the other day that every real American must challenge this drive toward the police state. From our universities, our churches, our labor organizations, our genuine statesmen, comes the warning of danger and the plea to save an America that is free, tolerant and unafraid. It is a great cause. Writers bear a great responsibility to it. For to allow this cheaply arrogant concept of loyalty to go unchallenged is to be disloyal to all that is fine and decent in our American heritage.

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FOR some time *The Screen Writer* has been campaigning for greater recognition by critics of the screenwriter's key place in the creative scheme of things. Possibly it is beginning to register.

Significant of what *The Screen Writer* hopes will be a fresh trend in motion picture appraisal is the review of *The Bachelor and the Bobby Soxer* by Bosley Crowther in the esteemed *New York Times*.

The review—which has occasioned much comment among screen writers—is remarkable in that it gives the writer, Sidney Sheldon, the same attention in evaluating the picture that Brooks Atkinson, the paper's dramatic critic, would give a playwright in discussing a new stage offering.

The bland assumption that the screenplay "just grewed"—like some typewriter Topsy—is notably missing from the review. In fact, the first three paragraphs of the five paragraph review are devoted to discussing the contribution of Mr. Sheldon. It is a complete reversal of the usual belated P.S. that the average critic provides as recognition of the simple fact that the picture wasn't merely a two-hour ad-lib.

As a Progress Report the whole thing is very heartening. By contrast, however, is Paramount's full page ad in the current magazines announcing the advent of *Welcome Stranger*—and heralding that it is by the same man who wrote *Going My Way*. But it doesn't mention that writer's name!



# SWG Bulletin

## The Economic Program

*As a statement of principle and a guide to long-range activity of the Screen Writers' Guild, the report which follows became an official document of the organization upon its ratification at a general membership meeting September 8, 1947.*

*The report was ratified by the adoption of this motion made at the membership meeting: That the Economic Report be adopted by the membership as the economic program of the Guild.*

*The SWG Executive Board, at a subsequent meeting, urged that the report be studied by every screen writer with the full seriousness that the subject merits. In addition the Board has ordered that questionnaires on the subject be mailed to the full membership. It is hoped that by this means the ideas and attitudes of all active members concerning this subject can be determined, and that membership interest will aid subsequent committees in the further development and implementation of a program designed to meet the incontrovertible need of screen writers for betterment of their economic status.*

*The SWG Economic Committee points out that its report has been subjected to misleading interpretations in the press.*

*Without proposing any specific percentage, the report merely suggests that whatever royalty percentage we bargain for be on the gross income of the studios rather than on the box office gross of the industry. It proposes the establishment of a minimum royalty as one measure to secure for screen writers the more stabilized and equitable compensation they feel their basic contributions to the industry deserve.*

*The report as drafted by Lester Cole, chairman of the SWG Economic Program Committee, follows:*

Late last year the membership requested a survey that would analyze our economic relationship to this industry and bring back recommendations of methods to improve what has generally been considered an unsatisfactory situation. Members of the Guild were appointed to the Economic Program Committee by the Executive Board; which also appointed me as Chairman. The following are the committee members who have been working on various aspects of this report since last November: Melville Baker, Hugo Butler, John Collier, Walter Doniger, Frank Gabrielson, Morton Grant, Ring Lardner,

Jr., William Lively, Maurice Rapf, Stanley Roberts, Sol Shor, Arthur Strawn, Louise Rousseau, and Brenda Weisberg.

The August issue of *The Screen Writer* presented a preliminary survey of some of the factors relating to our economic position in the industry. (Incidentally, the committee wishes it to be stated that the article, *Where Credit Is Due*, by Philip Stevenson, expressed the personal views of the author, and while properly belonging in the magazine as such, did not express the views of the committee on this subject.)

This report represents the final thinking of the committee to date; it correlates the material in the magazine with other factors, summarizes the results of statistics studied, and presents our conclusions in the form of a recommendation.

The editorial in the August issue of *The Screen Writer*, which, as always, reflects the official position of the Executive Board of the Guild, describes the Taft-Hartley Act as a mean blow to all organized labor, and a direct threat to the very existence of the Screen Writers' Guild. The editorial concludes with the sentence: "Now, above all, is the time to close ranks and move forward."

Beyond its immediate reference to the Act itself, it was not within the scope of the editorial to elaborate on that general recommendation, nor to attempt to answer the two fundamental questions raised by it, fundamental questions which always have been with us. Namely: how to close ranks, and which direction is forward? Since first we sought to establish and put into practice the principle that screenwriters, like all other citizens, were entitled to a collective bargaining organization of their own choosing, we ran into opposition. Not only on the part of the industry, but also among writers, who attempted to characterize us as creatures apart, as ultra-individualists, as Capital A artists. We gained recognition finally, but let it not be thought by those who have arrived after the 1933-1939 period that recognition was achieved without all the blacklists, threats, intimidations, smears and company union set-ups which occur in every other industry where the same rights are sought by employees.

With recognition won, we set about the job of remedying abuses. We eliminated (in theory) speculative writing. We control credits. We raised minimum wages

from \$25 per week to \$187.50 per week. We regulated to a certain small extent the apprentice abuse. But during this entire period of time there existed a situation in writer-employer relationship which eluded us. Employment conditions were chaotic; there was no economic security for the great majority, regardless of what the individual's salary was per week, or what his contribution was to the industry's output. And, with the passage of time, both of these conditions were aggravated to a point seemingly beyond our control; the number of available qualified writers living in Hollywood—on call, you might say—was increasing out of proportion to the number of pictures being made. Some of the figures illustrating this will be found in Ring Lardner's article in the August *Screen Writer*.

### The Problem of the "Pool"

At the outset, the committee vaguely understood that this ever-increasing pool was certainly related to the problem, but it seemed so obvious, and such a foregone conclusion, so much a part of "the-way-things-are-and-the-way-they'll-always-be," so much a fixed state of things—like the sun and the moon—that we paid little attention to it.

Instead, we divided ourselves into three groups, to study statistics in different fields. A statistician, previously employed, had produced a general break-down of industry employment, company profits, etc., etc., and they were most impressive in demonstrating how much the producers got in comparison to what we got. But we always knew that; no one on the committee was surprised to discover we were at the short end of the deal. But discovering that our total earnings were only about one percent of the U. S. gross—and how much less of the world gross—was stunning. We set out then to see if we could discover the reasons. One subcommittee studied the re-issue situation, the second minimum wages and minimum periods of employment, and the third the overall economic status of writers in all categories.

### The Problem of Reissues

Some of the figures on reissues are in *The Screen Writer* articles. If you've read them, you know we discovered that reissues without additional compensation are not merely an economic blow to writers alone; actors suffer even more severely



from them—numerically, that is—than we do. So do directors, cameramen, and to a greater or lesser extent, all crafts directly connected with production, as distinguished from maintenance and administration.

Since the membership had already called for action to curb this abuse if possible, the Executive Board issued an invitation to all Guilds and Unions to discuss ways and means of recovering our share of reissue profits. Our invitation was accepted by delegates from the Screen Actors' Guild, the Production Managers' Guild, Screen Directors, Story Analysts, Publicists, Editors, Art Directors, Set Designers, Cartoonists, Screen Extras, Plumbers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and Carpenters. It was our first meeting; there was agreement in principle that all crafts concerned with production should be further compensated for reissues, and the matter was taken back to the respective executive boards for study. We hope to make progress, but we are not foolishly optimistic in any belief that because we are justified we will succeed. We were also justified in our demand that the Screen Writers' Guild be recognized as the bargaining agent for all writers. Success was a long time coming.

#### The Problem of "The Minimum"

The second sub-committee, the one studying minimum wages and periods of employment made an exhaustive study of the situation, and brought in many suggestions for remedies. While no precise sums are recommended at this time, it was obvious that if the Guild considers that a writer remains an active member as long as he works 13 weeks in two years, and if that member's salary is \$187.50 per week, the present Guild minimum for a qualified writer, an active member, is \$2,437.50 bi-annually, or \$1,218.75 per year. This calls for sharp adjustment—upward.

In the field of low-cost independent production, the abuse of undercutting our minimum is rampant, but in this we ourselves must take a good share of the blame. It was pointed out in 1942 that the contract we were about to accept—and did—was wide open to the type of malpractice that ensued; namely, we failed to stipulate that under no conditions can the weekly salary paid be less than the minimum flat deal in that particular cost bracket of production. At present, it is possible for a producer to engage a writer on a weekly basis, at \$187.50 or even \$250 and by getting a script in three or four weeks, cut the \$1,500 minimum in half or by a third.

This recent occurrence will illustrate how highly the producers in this field regard their present arrangement with us: A few weeks ago a meeting was called by Mr. Chadwick of the Independent Motion Picture Producers Association, to which were invited all the guilds and unions in Hollywood. Mr. Chadwick sang the blues; he offered to open his books for union inspection, to prove that the unions had to cooperate (read: "make concessions") if Mr. Chadwick's group was to continue in business. But note! The one Guild of the forty-eight in Hollywood NOT invited to this book-opening fiesta was the Screen Writers' Guild. There are at least two reasons for this: first, the books would reveal the unbelievable low percentage of production cost put into their scripts, and second, the script cost is so pitiful even Mr. Chadwick couldn't hope to wring further concessions from us. Since the pictures made by the Chadwick and like groups number close to fifty percent of Hollywood's total production, and therefore employ a proportionate number of our members, this is no small matter to be tabled for future consideration.

A meeting of all writers who work mainly in that field is to be called very soon; a thorough airing of that particular problem will be had, and the Executive Board will at once seek ways and means of re-opening negotiations.

#### The Problem of Employment

Having studied the question of reissues, and the situation in the field of independent production, and minimum wages, the committee realized—by now months had passed—that we were no closer to the general, over-all problem than we were in the beginning. With one exception: we discovered that the general problem of *employment*, and the constant condition of ever lengthening periods of unemployment required more than a trade union approach; or properly, required a trade union approach and more. The reasons became apparent: trade union practices were not adequate for *all* of our problems; we had no thoughts of demanding an increase in production to make work for writers, no matter how much we'd like to see it. We do not want, nor do we conceive, a system of standby writers, however justified it may be in other fields, and finally, we know that our work is of a special, individual nature, and there can be no rotation of jobs or work. We cannot have eight hour work days of three writers split up into six hour work days for four writers. Cultural, creative work cannot be apportioned in that way.

At last we arrived at two indisputable facts about the economic condition of writers in this business: (1) that in order to make 350 to 500 pictures a year, the industry required a much larger number of available writers to achieve its quota—and (2) that, whether 100 writers worked in a given year or 1,000, the total amount of compensation paid them was ridiculously low in relation to the value of their contribution and to the total industry income.

To consider first the question of the pool of writers competing for jobs. There is no way to fix the number accurately. Ring Lardner, Jr., in his article, estimated it at roughly 1,500, which included most of our associate membership and those writers who work in Hollywood but still haven't joined the Guild. You might set the maximum figure at many times this number if you included the thousands of writers all over the world who would respond to an attractively phrased telegram from one of our major producing companies. But as a Guild we are basically concerned with a minimum pool consisting of the present number of active qualified members of the Guild. That figure, as of July 26th, was 1,010.

#### The Writer in Production Practice

It is not that *we* contend this pool to be an absolute necessity to the producers; the producers prove this contention in a manner which cannot be argued. Last year they employed about 900 writers in order to make 350-400 pictures. Indisputably, then, 900 writers were considered necessary by them to fulfill their requirements under the present methods of production. Whatever our private opinions of these methods may be, they are production practices which in fact exist, in which we are in fact involved, over which in fact we have no control, and over which we at present seek no control. Producing motion pictures is the business of the companies; writing them is ours.

It is hardly necessary at a Guild meeting to go into a detailed analysis of why and how 900 or more writers are necessary to make less than five hundred pictures. We all know that a great many scripts are shelved and that the reasons are frequently quite outside the control of the writer. We all know that a succession of writers may be engaged on a single screenplay and that a producer's whim or lack of self-confidence is as likely a reason for changing writers as any other.

A member of our committee recently received a telegram of credit notification



which was addressed to 24 writers. What we feel is most significant in a case like that is the fact that, while the one, two or three writers receiving final screenplay credit are undoubtedly the major contributors, the other writers cannot therefore be said to have furnished the studio nothing of value in exchange for their salaries. Even if they only explored an approach to the story—their own or the producer's—which was later discarded, this was a service desired and deemed necessary by the studio in order to make the final picture to its satisfaction. Similarly, if a studio finds it necessary to prepare 50% or a 100% more scripts than it actually makes, the fact that a script is shelved because of unavailability of stars, directors or stage space, box-office trends or any other factor, does not mean that the writer of that script is not a contributor to the picture business and its profits. And, of course, a reason for the preparation of more scripts than are used is one fundamental to all work of a creative nature; until the manuscript is written there can be no final judgment of its production acceptability.

These reasons and others have always been a part of the Guild's thinking. It is why our qualifications for active membership are not based upon screen credits alone, but provide that a member may also be admitted or retained on the basis of the number of weeks he works, with or without screen credit.

## The Case of the Unemployed

We are faced, then, with the existence of a large pool of writers available for a greatly fewer number of jobs open at any given time. Inevitably at any membership meeting, therefore, there will be a considerable number of writers who are currently unemployed. We wish, naturally, that we had some sort of direct cure to suggest for unemployment but the fact is—and we might as well state it bluntly—we have no such cure and we do not believe that a practical method exists within the scope and power of this Guild to seek *full* employment *all* the time for *all* writers. But the program we are going to propose will have a considerable indirect effect on the economic security of all working writers, employed and unemployed at any particular time. This program is not only within the power of the Guild: it goes to the very heart of its main purpose and basic reason for existence—which is to improve the economic conditions of writers through, in the words of our Constitution, "harmonious and concerted action by its members."

It is the feeling of the economic program committee and of the Executive

Board majority which endorsed this report that the Guild is deserting its principle function at any time the main emphasis of its endeavors is not directed toward increasing the total compensation paid to writers in this industry. We recognize, of course, that this would not be true—and perhaps there would be little use for a Guild at all—if, now or in the future, writers were getting the full share to which their contribution to pictures entitles them. But we most emphatically don't believe this has ever been the case, or is now.

## That \$1,800,000,000 Gross

The American domestic box-office gross last year was about 1 billion 800 million dollars, of which approximately a quarter represents the gross income of the Hollywood studios. (Actually the separation between production, distribution and exhibition is one which has more existence in the field of bookkeeping than in that of reality.) The total amount paid to employed screenwriters during a comparable period was about 18 million dollars. Without for a moment accepting the current British-American controversy as an indication that foreign revenues are disappearing, let us confine ourselves to the more stable domestic receipts and say that 1% of what American movie-goers pay for their entertainment is allocated to the writing of screenplays.

If every writer in Hollywood lived in the wealth and splendor generally attributed to us, we might shrug off this obvious inequity and say that we don't mind being rich just because it makes someone else richer. But we know that the average screenwriter, considering present living costs, has only a fairly modest income and no security at all against illness, and unproductive, arid periods common to us all.

We feel that the main direction of the future course of the Guild must be to secure more money for writers and to do it in such a way as to maintain the principle of the greater the contribution, the greater the compensation, but still provide a cushion on which the man who is temporarily floored can recuperate.

## The Minimum Royalty Aims

We think that by far the best way to accomplish this is to impose what we would call a minimum royalty on the total industry gross to be distributed by the Guild to its active members according to their contributions—in somewhat the same way as ASCAP does in the songwriting field.

There are, of course, two other ways in which writers could get more money

than they do now. One would be to raise salary levels all along the line. But this is something we have always realistically acknowledged that we, as a Guild, cannot do. Once we have established minimums to protect ourselves from unfair competition at the bottom, the salary of the individual writer is a matter for his individual bargaining, or that of his agent. Our salaries go up and down according to how much a studio needs us and how much we need the job. We can't say to the producers "Give everybody a 50% raise" any more than we will permit them to tell us that everyone should take a 50% cut. And there is no way we can set minimum salary figures at different levels—no way to determine, for instance, that the minimum for a writer with three screenplay credits on pictures costing \$800,000 or more, and who has a greater flair for comedy than for drama but usually turns out four pages of script a day, is \$750 a week.

The other alternative is to secure a royalty on the receipts of the specific picture for the writer or writers getting screen credit on it. We want to make it absolutely clear that we are in favor of such arrangements—for the individual writer who has sufficient bargaining strength to achieve them. And there is no conflict whatsoever between our proposal of a *minimum* royalty on a studio's overall gross and a particular setup in which a writer is able to get a percentage of the gross or profits of his own picture. But the reasons we put the minimum royalty first, as a *Guild objective for the whole membership*, are the following:

1. Though percentage deals have increased in the independent field on the fringe of the industry, the biggest studios are irrevocably set against them and have such accounting methods as to make it impossible to determine what one single picture grosses. What a studio makes as a whole for a year is a matter of record under the law, and for the Guild to collect a percentage on that for its members is an incomparably simpler process than the auditing which would have to go on before each writer could get his share of the writer's share of the individual picture's share of the studio income.

2. The majority of pictures are still based on material conceived by someone other than the author of the screenplay. A play, for instance, may occasionally be adapted to the screen with comparatively little work. On the other hand it may be so rewritten as to take as much time, effort and creative contribution as an original screenplay. Who is to determine in each unique case the exact royalty due



the author of the play, novel or original screen story; the writer whose script was re-written but who still receives adaptation credit; and the author of the final screenplay? It seems to us that the clearest and only completely satisfactory case for the traditional royalty arrangement is that of an original screenplay—and far too few pictures are written as such to make that a solution for the overall Guild problem.

3. The writer cannot be, as the industry is now set up, the controlling factor in determining the box-office success of a particular picture. As long as the studio determines who is to play the parts, what the production budget is to be and all the rest of the factors that influence the merit of a picture and its box-office appeal, or lack of it, individual royalties can never be an equitable measure of the writer's contribution.

#### A Minimum Royalty Practical

For all these reasons we are convinced that the only practical way to increase all working writer's share of motion picture income is the minimum royalty proposal for the exact amount we should fight for. One per cent of the domestic box-office gross, in addition to our salaried compensation, would mean double what we now receive. One per cent of the producer's gross might mean another 4 million dollars to distribute among the active membership in accordance with their contributions during the years immediately following release. What figure we should aim for and what we will get must be determined in the first instance by more professional statisticians than we are and, in the final analysis, by the degree of membership support for the plan.

Another, and very important matter on which we have no detailed charts to present is the precise formula according to which the Guild would distribute the minimum royalty. What we do have to offer at this stage are certain underlying principles for that distribution. The detailed method, to be formulated in scales and categories by actuarial tables, must be determined finally and solely by the Guild according to democratic vote. It is our business, not the producer's. There should be a certain amount of elasticity to it since it is quite possible that the Guild might find that a radical change in conditions one year would make a different formula more desirable. It must *never* be viewed or handled as any sort of unemployment insurance but distributed in some sort of proportion to the salary, credits, and work weeks of the individual.

In the committee's opinion, "share and share alike" is not democracy as we know it; it's Utopia, and we're not advocating Utopia. There must be the most rigid safeguards for democratic control and the protection of the individual's rights. The basis for qualification should be the same as that for active membership, though this doesn't necessarily mean that a writer would cease to participate as soon as his active membership expired, the general theory being that a writer would get a continuing income as long as the pictures on which he had worked still constituted a substantial part of the studio's gross.

#### Other Advantages in the Plan

This principle, incidentally, brings us to another advantage this plan has over any method of simply raising salaries all along the line. We want to get more money for the writer after he has worked as well as while he is working. If you raise a man's salary for the period during which he is working, he's less apt to use it as provision against unemployment than if he gets it when he's temporarily or permanently off salary.

And further, the minimum security afforded by such a plan must inevitably reflect itself in greater independence of all writers; freedom from economic pressures for a greater period of time than is our lot at present will tend to dissipate frustration and cynicism, which at present is not uncommon in our ranks. With the knowledge that three or four full years of screen writing has earned the individual royalties for a subsequent few years, more writers will devote more time to their original fields of novels, plays and short stories. This will not only gratify the individual, but in turn is a potential enrichment of our literature in these fields; inevitably, too, this work will become source material for the screen. We have no statistics on this, but we venture the opinion that today screenwriters worry more about jobs than about the creative problems of writing. This is unprofitable for everyone, including the producers. Finally, also pertinent is the factor of taxes. A few thousand dollars added to a substantial income doesn't increase the net very much if it is paid within the same year, but a similar amount in a lean year can do a great deal to provide minimum security.

One reason we are not going into any more detail now about this very vital question of distribution is the fact that the committee has had neither the time nor the qualifications to work out a com-

plete program. But the Executive Board could have held up the whole proposal for months so that we could have the time and expert assistance necessary to present a detailed formula along with the plan. The Board decided instead to submit the general principle first because we felt it would be both premature and confusing if the discussion wandered off into a consideration of the advantages and inequities of any particular schedule of royalties. If the membership rejects the principle, we would have done a lot of unnecessary work. If it is accepted, then we can direct the energy not just of one committee but of the Guild as a whole to working out the fairest and most practical approach.

A far more basic and immediate consideration is how and when we could hope to achieve such a program. We aren't being so politically ingenuous, or ingenious, as to put up for a vote the question of whether or not the members would like more money—yes or no. You might say the minimum royalty is the kind of idea that everyone will be for in principle, but we think that the question of whether we can achieve it, and when, is part of the principle itself. It would be unprincipled and destructive to the Guild for your Board to propose or the membership to endorse any objective we couldn't possibly gain or which is so far in the future that we would be wasting the effort we spent on it now.

#### The Future of the Program

The estimate of the majority of the Board is this: The proposal for a minimum royalty on the overall gross is a far more important and beneficial reform than any yet achieved in the screen writing world. For this reason we will face a stiffer resistance from the producing companies than we ever have before. And for the same reason it should be possible to muster enough strength, determination and unity around the issue to match that resistance.

We don't ask for the affirmative vote of any member who thinks that such a program can be put into effect by our merely deciding in favor of it in one night, nor for the vote of anyone who thinks he might as well be for it because it will never come to pass. We could say that this particular subject is outside the area of our Minimum Basic Agreement with the producers and therefore it could theoretically be put into effect tomorrow, but such a statement would wink away reality. One of the main sources of strength for a Guild is support from other guilds and unions who understand that



our gains help them—and of actual working allies who might join with us in approximately the same objective. We feel that first consideration in this direction should be given to the directors, whose problem is very close to ours and whose contract expires next year.

Our own contract lasts until May, 1949. But knowing the producers' natural inclination toward negotiations, we certainly should figure on having our demands fully formulated some time in 1948. If we determine that the minimum royalty proposal should be the spearhead of our program for 1949, it would not be too soon to start enlisting the manpower, time and money to convert a general principle into a specific plan.

One argument that shouldn't deter us is the false one we have been hearing on all sides in the last week that this is a bad moment to discuss new demands because the momentary impasse in British-American trade negotiations has driven the studios to a point somewhere between the brink of collapse and wistful talk of retrenchment. It's quite possible, of course, that we might get an invitation to a pay cut any day now—or at any time the studios think we're weak enough to accept it. What isn't possible is that they will ever call us in, as they might logically have done a year ago today, and say "Look, boys, and girls, we've just gone over the books and find we're making more money than we know what to do with and we think you should be the first to know because maybe you'd like a 50% raise all around." Instead, they prudently salted away those profits in sufficient quantities to take care of ten such crises as the present situation might develop into if it turns out to be a crisis at all.

## The Tests of the Program

This proposal, submitted to the Guild for action, should be judged according to the following tests:

*Is the proposed additional writing cost so unreasonable as to interfere seriously with the present economic structure of the industry?*

*Are we asking for more than an equitable share in relation to the writers' contribution?*

*Is it the fairest and most practical way to increase the writers' returns?*

*Will it benefit the membership as a whole rather than just one section of it?*

*Have we the strength to achieve it?*

In the opinion of the economic program committee and, by majority vote, of the

Executive Board, the answer to the first four questions are all favorable. To the last and crucial question of whether or not we have the strength, anyone's opinion is equally a guess and equally irrelevant, since the strength of the Guild in a particular fight is determined, above all other considerations, by how much the members care about winning it.

It is the committee's sincere belief that this principle provides the Guild with an issue with which, in the words of the editorial previously referred to, we can "close ranks" and "move forward."

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*At a full meeting of the SWG Over-All Economic Program Committee held July 7, 1947, a report breaking its recommendations down into ten specific proposals was made to the Executive Board. At the September 8 membership meeting Stanley Roberts, chairman of the Economic Program sub-Committee on Unemployment, read these proposals:*

1. Immediate compensation for writers whose pictures are remade or reissued.

2. A fight for higher minimum salaries and minimum periods of employment (two weeks at \$187.50 is certainly no minimum compared with the various other guilds and unions).

3. A Guild program for the stimulation of stories and screen plays written originally for the screen. A discussion with the producers of how they might give the same sort of stimulation to original writing for the screen as is afforded, for instance, by the MGM Prize Novel Contest.

4. The establishment of a Guild clearing house for the employment of writers in the field of 16 mm. production, and of educational and commercial shorts.

5. A proposal that no Guild member accede to any salary cut without the approval of the Executive Board or a sub-committee of the same; this to combat the current drive against salary standards.

6. To stop the current practice of undercutting minimum scales for flat deals by which studios pay on a weekly basis, so that the entire amount received by the writer is less than the flat deal minimum provided by the Minimum Basic Agreement.

7. To prohibit flat deals below normal salary levels which act as concealed salary cuts.

8. To start immediate negotiations with those studios not now covered by the Guild contract, and by that we mean particularly the members of the SIMPP.

9. For the first time to establish the precedent that the Industry, having long benefited by the use of the writer pool, in fact, insisting on its very existence, must now assume responsibility for its maintenance. That a Screen Writers Guild levy be placed on the over-all gross of motion pictures, with this money to be distributed according to the Guild's best lights.

10. That the Guild seek immediate tie-ups with other guilds and unions, particularly the Directors, so that this program can become a reality.

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## Reciprocal Membership For Screen Writers

*At the August 14 membership meeting approval was given to a reciprocal membership agreement between the British Screenwriters' Association, the Syndicat des Scénaristes of France and the Screen Writers' Guild of the United States.*

*A motion was approved to name Henry Myers, Edward Eliscu and Albert Lewin to meet with the British and French Screen Writers in Paris in September, and sign the agreement for SWG.*

*Following is the reciprocal representation agreement to be entered into by the three national organizations of screenwriters:*

SCREENWRITERS ASSOCIATION  
(BRITISH)

*Non-Resident Members. Proposed Scheme of reciprocal representation.*

1. Agreement is being made with the Screen Writers' Guild of Hollywood, and the Syndicat des Scénaristes of France, and eventually with other foreign organizations whereby:

(a) Full members of all screen writers organizations temporarily resident in another country automatically become temporary members of the screen writers' organization of that country without payment of further dues; such temporary members retain all the rights they already have in their country of origin, and acquire such temporary rights in the country which they are visiting as the screen writers organization of that country in detail agrees to offer them: viz: social and cultural facilities, receiving of literature, attendance at general



meetings without voting powers, and legal advice and protection for work on films produced in the country where they are temporarily resident.

(b) All screen writers' organizations will endeavor to protect and assist all screen writers in circumstances not covered by the preceding sub-paragraph.

(c) Such full members become eligible for full membership of the screen writers' organization of the country of domicile, and cease to be members of the organization of their country of origin and become liable to the dues of the organization of the country of domicile on January 1st of the year subsequent to that in which they have become legally domiciled, or, if they prefer, have given notice that they intend to become full members of the organization of the new country whenever that organization is willing to accept their membership, but in this case no dues paid in the old country are returnable.

2. Members or associate members of a screen writers organization in any country, and persons who would be eligible for such membership or associate membership if an organization existed, may become *Corresponding Members* of the Screenwriters Association for a payment of one pound per annum. This entitles them to receive all literature

generally distributed to the members of the Screenwriters Association, but conveys no other rights: these being adequately secured by their membership of their own organization. In cases where no such organization exists the Screenwriters Association will do their best to protect their interests in any case of general interest to screen writers.

3. Full members of the Screenwriters Association who have become *permanently* resident abroad may therefore become *Corresponding Members* as from January 1st, 1947 for the payment of one pound. In the case where they have retained membership of the Society of Authors and League of British Dramatists, and therefore have been paying less than one pound for membership of the Screenwriters Association, they may continue to pay their present proportion, being less than one pound.

4. Associate members of the Screenwriters Association who become permanently resident abroad may likewise become Corresponding Members on exactly the same terms. Note: *Clauses 2, 3 and 4 apply immediately as far as this Association is concerned, irrespective of whether Clause 1 is adopted and members of this Association, resident abroad, are being notified accordingly.*

### Production Code

George Seaton, F. Hugh Herbert and Richard Collins are members of

the SWG committee named to meet with other industry representatives to discuss revisions of the Production Code.

Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association, has expressed a desire to be present at the meetings, which will be held when he returns to Hollywood.

### Negotiations With The Agents

Following acceptance by the membership of the proposed agreement with the agents as drafted by the SWG Agents Committee, Mary McCall Jr., Chairman of the Committee, on September 5 submitted the proposals for an agreement to Bert Allenberg, who is chairman of the Artists Managers Guild, with a request that negotiations be begun at an early date. The full text of the letter is as follows:

"The Screen Writers' Guild wishes to enter into negotiations with the Artists Managers Guild for the purpose of mutual agreement upon a Minimum Basic Contract. I enclose our Guild's proposals for the provisions of such a Basic Contract between the two organizations.

"We feel sure that your Guild shares our desire for a clarification and standardization of the relationship of writers and their agents, and that you will as soon as possible name a bargaining committee and communicate with us so that we may set an early date for the commencement of negotiations."

*H. N. Swanson, literary agent, wrote the following statement as a contribution to the symposium published in the September issue of The Screen Writer on the writers' share of the motion picture box office gross. Since it arrived too late for publication in September, it is presented here.*

A large number of today's unemployed studio writers are adapters rather than creators. The new motion picture makers have repeatedly stressed that they don't want the old literary carpenters around any more. This trend has been in effect for some time, but is more noticeable now that

there are more available people.

Studios may now select from an ever widening pool of screen writers, and ruthless selectivity is employed in hiring. In thus narrowing down to fewer jobs for better people, the studios will soon find themselves paying more money to such people than the industry has ever dreamed of paying.

If I were trying for a career as a screen writer, I would first make certain that I would be able to make a living in the magazine, book or radio fields during those periods in which I was not employed. Even if I were offered a studio contract for fifty-two straight weeks a year, I

would refuse it because I would consider it to be burning my bridges, and I would feel such specialization would be very dangerous for my future. I would try to keep remembering always that work in other fields would not only keep me more flexible, but would insure my financial and artistic independence as nothing else can.

A real creator is not destroyed by being "off salary." He is not demoralized by trade paper headlines nor what happens to the fickle box office barometer. If what he writes for himself is any good at all, he will earn many times more by having written for himself than as a member of some studio's writing staff.



# Report and Comment

## Paris Notes

EDWARD ELISCU

**W**E'VE been here for five weeks —(Henry Myers, Al Lewin and I)—and already we live like Parisians. We spend one hour a day coralling taxis, two hours for lunch, and just under three hours for dinner.

We are perfectly acclimatized. By now it seems as natural as driving down Sunset Boulevard for three American screenwriters to be collaborating on a British classic that will be shot in France.

A few days after we unscrambled ourselves from the plane, we were invited to meet the officers and the executive board of the French equivalent of the Screen Writers' Guild: the *Syndicat des Scénaristes*. They received us with champagne, fraternal greetings and the information that we were the first to profit by a new agreement, by which we are under their rules and protection while writing pictures in France.

*Le Syndicat des Scénaristes* occupies quarters in the two magnificent buildings owned by the parent organization, the *Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques*. If you've never known the fact, or if you've forgotten, an impressive plaque in the courtyard reminds you that the *Société* was founded by Beaumarchais in 1765. They've been fighting for their royalties ever since, and French screenwriters are very much like us. Some of them wear loud ties, and some don't, but they're all interested in their craft, credits and a Better Deal. Tradition and law constantly make it easier for them to improve their situation.

Over here, every assignment calls for a flat deal. Naturally, the amount varies with individual experience and bargaining power, but there's a guar-

anteed minimum. The contract always is made for the entire job. The week-to-week arrangement is unheard of. A man is paid for the whole stint no matter how many buffers and polishers may be called in, and whether or not he is permitted to finish it.

Nobody has to punch a clock, and nobody wants to punch a producer too often, because he never phones you, except possibly to suggest that Paris is too distracting and perhaps you would like to complete the script at some French Palm Springs. At his expense, of course.

Are there agents in Paris? Yes, but the majority of writers make their own deals. Contracts are clear and standardized. For those retiring creatures who dislike both agents and business, the *Syndicat des Scénaristes* stands ready to step in (only if the writer requests it) to carry the ball, for the customary ten percent.

In the field of original material, we can learn several lessons from our French colleagues. Their law recognizes the author as the owner of the literary property which he has created. He merely leases this to a producer for a specific usage—in this case a motion picture—and for a specific period of time—(now fixed at seven or ten years). If this situation prevailed in our country there could be no talk of Triple A being ploughed under. Had Jim Cain been a Frenchman marketing *Double Indemnité*, and had it been sold three times, he would have collected three times. Original deal, remake, reissue, whatever the format, whatever the disguise, said property forever belongs and reverts to its French author.

And that's not all. Every writer receives a small percentage of the gross, collected from theatres which show the film he's written. This is his cut of the money paid to SAC-CEM, which closely resembles our ASCAP.

**I**N SHORT, while we've been making speeches on the floor of the Guild about dignity and dough, they've achieved those objectives. Now they're talking about limiting the

number of writers who may be engaged for a given job, on the ground that the present buy-'em-by-the-dozen attitude toward writers is degrading and makes style impossible. They point out that there will be the same amount allotted in the budget, and anyway a producer should have judgment enough to pick the correct writers in the first place.

Despite their achievements, their present setup is a newer one than ours. It's been in existence only since the Liberation. They have a mere hundred members, but behind these are closely arrayed not only the other writers of France, but all the unions of the entertainment field. Recently a picture producer tried to get away with cutting a writer's payment. Overnight he was confronted with the nightmarish possibility of a walkout by every carpenter, grip, lab worker, musician, cameraman, etc. . . . You know what he did.

Of course that poor producer might have been driven frantic by the Byrnes-Blum agreement which has cut French film production by forty percent. Unemployment is widespread, and that includes writers. Some are working on films in other languages, especially Italian. This concerns us, for French writing-jobs have decreased—without increasing *American jobs*. Apparently the American companies are distributing their 'backlog' in the additional houses opened to them by the agreement. Tom Mix is playing at the first run houses this week.

From the *Scénaristes* we got the impression that the French movie-going public is rapidly catching on to the discrepancy between the publicity promise and the eight-reel performance, of the Hollywood importations.

The French writers are keenly aware of problems common to all of us. They expressed their appreciation over the SWG joining their protest about l'affaire Bruxelles, where writers were not credited in the pictures shown for awards. That allied front has brought results. The "slight oversight" was not repeated at the film festival at Cannes in September,

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EDWARD ELISCU, a member of SWG, is the well-known screen writer and dramatist. He was a co-contributor of the Letter From Paris in the September issue of The Screen Writer.



because official measures were taken to see that it wasn't.

The *Scénaristes* hope shortly to arrange a meeting, to be attended by screen writers of Paris, London and Hollywood, at which they will discuss the possibilities of exchanging information and building closer cooperation.

## Licensing Progress In England

*This report of the attitude of British screen writers toward the AAA and the general licensing program is taken from the minutes of a recent meeting of the Screenwriters Association held at The Rising Sun, Tottenham Court Road, London, W. I.:*

"To discuss the attitude of the Association to the American Authors' Authority plan and to consider what steps should be taken in this country to establish the principle of lease of copyright, instead of outright sale, and separation of secondary rights in original screen material."

The Hon. Secretary reported on discussions that had already taken

place on this subject in Committee. It had been reported by leading agents who were members of the Association that there was already a growing readiness among British producers to consent, when asked, to the purchase of a license to produce original material within a stated number of years, and that in many cases they were willing to allow secondary rights in original screen material to be retained by the author, though such concessions were not made by any American film company. This brought the screenwriter into line with the dramatist who gave a manager a license to produce which reverted to the author if the manager failed to carry out the agreement; with the novelist who granted a publisher a license to publish within a specified time; and with the composer whose secondary rights were protected for him by the Performing Rights Society. It was interesting to note that over a third of screenwriters who had answered the questionnaire normally enjoyed such an arrangement. The Committee had already approached the Society of Authors with a view to arranging a joint deputation from the Composers' Guild, to ask the

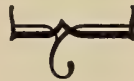
B.F.P.A. to concede the general principle of lease of copyright and separation of secondary rights in the case of original screen stories.

Mr. John Cousins proposed that the Committee be empowered to go ahead with the suggested arrangements within the next 30 days. Seconded by Mr. Roger Bray.

Mr. Wolfgang Wilhelm, Mr. T. E. B. Clarke and Mr. J. Whittingham thought it would be advisable to postpone such an approach to the B.F.P.A.

Mr. Roger Burford proposed (seconded by Mr. John Cousins) that the Executive Committee should prepare and circulate a number of satisfactory contracts in a variety of cases, which have been accepted by producers and also that the Executive Committee should prepare and circulate satisfactory contracts suitable for a variety of cases. Mr. Burford's motion was carried unanimously.

The Hon. Secretary proposed that the meeting pass a motion that the Association was in sympathy with the Hollywood Guild on the principles for which they are now fighting. This was seconded by Mr. Jack Whittingham and passed unanimously.



## Correspondence

*The following communication has been received from Peter Noble, editor of the British Film Quarterly and member of the Screen Writers' Association of London:*

May I congratulate you on the magazine? *The Screen Writer* improves issue by issue. We eagerly look forward to every number.

If you see any pieces in the *Film Quarterly* you would care to reprint in *The Screen Writer*, please go ahead and do so—no fee.

PETER NOBLE

*The following letter has been received from SWG member Don Hale Munson:*

Please accept my congratulations on the September issue—which I think

the best yet. I especially enjoyed F. Hugh Herbert's *Subject: Bindle Biog.*, I. A. L. Diamond's *Darling, You Mean . . . ?* and Lillian Bos Ross' *How One Movie Sale Was Made . . .* in that order.

While the technical copy is fine, such stuff as Mr. Herbert's *Bindle Biog.* completes the book. I'm all in favor of pumping more red and live blood like it into the *Screen Writer*.

DON HALE MUNSON

*The following letter has been received from Charles Palmer:*

A commentary on George Seaton's highly practical recommendation in the last issue of *The Screen Writer*. I recently finished the screenplay on *The Stranger Next Door*, and have signed on to work as dialogue director through its production.

It's a logical thing, since the writer, and only he, knows the full intention behind the material, and other writers might be able to get the same deal. Since the director still stands between my inexperience and the screen, the producer is protected.

Paradoxically, such deals should be doubly interesting on low budget pictures, where the director never has enough time to work with his cast and hence the writer-dialogue director can bring the people on the lighted set with some rehearsal. Frankly, I cut my writing rate considerably, but consider it a cheap price for the education I expect to get in the hard facts of production.

Corroborating Seaton, I never learned as much about radio writing as I did when I had to direct my own



stuff. But you inevitably learn more when you're a working member of the crew—hence this idea of putting in for the job of dialogue director on your own stuff.

CHARLES PALMER

*The following letter has been received from Corley McDarment:*

Listen: Somebody tell Harry Bernstein to stop reading awhile and do some writing like that *Reading for the Movies* article in the July *Screen Writer*.

A piece of writing like that, doctored up and slanted, could easily be *Satevepost* stuff.

An besides, he ought to be *writing comedy* for the movies.

I read his piece out of curiosity, and it was getting a little tiresome to me until he told about the "elderly, rusty looking dame" who was an agent. She sat cross-legged, stared at him and kept asking him the same questions. Just the type of character who forgets what she said a few minutes back. And then "a funny look, I guess began to come on my face," confessed Sad Sack Harry, for the dame called another studio and asked them to send her "someone with a little sense." She said it right before Harry. He didn't count.

When reading this hurriedly, I chuckled. But before going further, I could picture that scene, and suddenly I broke into a big laugh, and I am still laughing when I think of it.

From that paragraph on I read every word Harry wrote. When I came to that part where the slim young thing got out of a limousine with a "string of low bellied dogs," I laughed again. Harry got out of the way and let the dogs precede him because he felt low enough to walk upright under them. He didn't exactly say that but that was the feeling he had imparted to the reader—to me anyway.

I believe Mr. Bernstein has already arrived as a writer and does not know it. One funny thing about

his SW piece is that he seems so serious about his subject and his *plight*. This is literary Sad Sack stuff.

Some day I may run up on Harry, (I'm doing a book too), but when I do, he will probably be getting out of a limousine with a string of bitches.

CORLEY McDARMENT

1108 N. Pitt St.,  
Alexandria, Va.

## Letter From London

*(Continued From Inside Front Cover)*

Association, and to the A.C.T., reaffirming our position and asking that the grades of Screenwriter, Scenario Editor, Assistant Scenario Editor, Literary Editor, and Assistant Literary Editor be omitted from the Schedule. Our request was made on the following grounds:

(a) *The Screenwriters Association had been in existence for over twelve years and represented 99% of writers engaged in feature film production, as well as a number of short and documentary film writers; that with very few exceptions those of our members who were also members of the A.C.T. were represented by the A.C.T. in respect of alternative functions as director or assistant-producer, etc. but were represented as screenwriters by us. We questioned whether the A.C.T. did, in fact, represent any substantial number of feature screenwriters as writers.*

(b) *We denied the A.C.T.'s claim that only a Trades Union was competent to negotiate on wages and terms of employment, pointing out that we were at present involved with our parent body, The British Society of Authors Playwrights and Composers, in negotiation on these matters with the British Broadcasting Corporation.*

(c) *We considered the present position analogous to a Theatre Workers' Union negotiating on wages and terms of employment for dramatists without consultation of the League of British Dramatists.*

AT an interview with the Film Producers Association, it was confirmed that the signing of the Union Agreement in its proposed form presupposed the acceptance of the A.C.T. as the proper negotiating body in future on wages and terms

of employment for screenwriters. It was also made clear that the Agreement referred exclusively to feature screenwriters.

As a result of the discussion the Producers Association agreed that the A.C.T. should be asked to furnish proof of substantial representation in the four grades under discussion, or alternatively to agree to strike out these grades from the Agreement.

It was agreed that the Screenwriters Association made no claims to represent the additional categories of Reader and Research.

At a meeting between the Producers and the A.C.T. it is understood that the A.C.T. demanded the signing of the Agreement in toto. It was then proposed by B.F.P.A. that the Agreement be signed with the inclusion of these grades, but with a Supplementary Agreement to the effect that, notwithstanding the inclusion of the grades, the Agreement should be without prejudice to any future arrangement that might be reached between the A.C.T. and the Screenwriters Association. We would not accept this.

The matter was then placed by the Screenwriters Association before the Committee of Management of the British Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, who sent a telegram to Mr. J. A. Rank, President of the B.F.P.A. protesting at the inclusion of screenwriters in the Union Agreement without consultation of the Screenwriters Association.

At a subsequent meeting of the Council of A.C.T., it was agreed that the grades of Screenwriter and Scenario Editor should be struck out of the Schedule, though A.C.T. reserved the right to organize these grades. It was also agreed that the grades of Literary Editor and Assistant Literary Editor should be struck out if the Producers insisted, but the Producers did not insist.

The Agreement was then ratified by the Union and the Producers *with out* the grades of Screenwriter and Scenario Editor.

# News Notes

★ Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture are: The Films of Jean Renoir (I): *The Lower Depths*, Oct. 3, 4, 5; The Films of Jean Renoir (II): *Le Grand Illusion*, Oct. 6, 7, 8, 9; Mystery and Violence: *Pepe Le Moko*, Oct. 10, 11, 12; *The Return to the Soil*: Oct. 13, 14, 15, 16; The French Documentary Film: *L'Hippocampe*, *L'Amitié Noire*, *Le Retour*, Oct. 17, 18, 19; The Swedish Film (I): Seastrom & Stiller, *The Treasure of Arne*, *The Phantom Chariot*, Oct. 21, 22, 23; The Swedish Film (II): Seastrom & Stiller, *The Outlaw and His Wife*, *The Story of Gosta Berling*, Oct. 24, 25, 26; The British Film (I): *Bluebottles*, *Blackmail*, Oct. 27, 28, 29, 30; The British Film (II): Hitchcock: *Juno and the Paycock*, Oct. 31, Nov. 1, 2.

★ *Miss Abbie's Honor*, a new novel by SWG member Jan Fortune, has been scheduled by D. Appleton-Century for publication in late winter or early spring.

★ SWG member Robert Bleas has sold a short story, *Perfect Gentleman*, to *Cosmopolitan*.

★ Donn Hale Munson, SWG associate member, has recently sold stories and articles to *American Legion Magazine*, *Foreign Service* and the *Toronto Star*. His new novel, *Iris*, is soon to be published.

★ SWG member Harold Goldman has just sold a murder story, *The Key in the Lock*, to *This Week*, which also bought recently his *Old Wound*, a short-short.

★ One of the recent *Atlantic Monthly* articles by Gordon Kahn, editor of *The Screen Writer*, was picked up for a reprint in current *Reader's Digest* — and Mr. Kahn collected for this literary reissue.

★ SWG member Charles Palmer's textbook, *Twenty Modern Americans*, (Harcourt Brace 1942) is being re-published in German for use in re-education program in the occupied territory.

★ SWG member Malvin Wald's children's book, *The Boy Who Owned An Elephant*, will be published this winter by Grosset & Dunlap, with illustrations by Kurt Wiese.

★ Norman Burnside, former SWG member, has a story, *Now In October*, in the October number of *Opinion*.

★ A new comedy, *The Divine Flora*, by SWG members Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements is being published by Samuel French for immediate release.

★ Donald Kent Stanford, SWG associate member, has another story in November *Redbook*.

★ SWG member Martin Goldsmith had a story, *Last Minute Miracle*, in a recent number of *Cosmopolitan*.

★ SWG member Leo Mittler, after conferences with Dore Schary of RKO about his directorial commitments, returned to New York to direct Oscar Karlweis in *Topaze* by Marcel Pagnol for The New Opera Company.

★ The Peoples Educational Center's Fall Term begins the week of October 6th with a full schedule of evening classes for adults. The Motion Picture Direction Course continues with Frank Tuttle as coordinator. Participating guest lecturers include Herbert Biberman, Edward Dymtryk, David Raksin, Selena Royle, Adrian Scott, Vincent Sherman and others. Screenwriting courses will be taught by Howard Dimsdale, Bernard Gordon and Sam Mintz. Guy Endore and John Sanford continue their advanced workshop course in the novel, Wilma Shore teaches Advanced Short Story, and a number of motion picture publicists will col-

laborate in the course, Publicity and Public Relations. In addition, the Center offers a varied curriculum of appreciation courses in art, music and architecture; drawing and painting classes; general and child psychology and a number of courses in history of the labor movement, trade unions, philosophy and economics. Most classes may be audited the first session. For descriptive catalog, write or phone the Peoples Educational Center, 1717 N. Vine Street, HOLLYWOOD 6291.

**ATTENTION JOHNSTON OFFICE:** It is reported that the theatres of the Lucas-Jenkins chain in Savannah, Georgia, have the habit of cutting credits off the films they exhibit. They flash the title, and then the picture begins. No credits for cast, producer, director or WRITER.

★ Through an oversight the name of Brenda Weisberg was omitted from a list of members of the SWG Economic Program Committee as published in a recent issue of *The Screen Writer*. She is a member of that committee.

★ Creative Film Associates, 2021 Holly Drive, Hollywood 28, has been making a screen survey of the German cinema, showing a series of German films at the Hollywood School of Dramatic Arts, 1745 North La Brea. Films shown so far are *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Golem*, *Destiny*, *Siegfried*, *Hamlet*, *The Last Laugh*, *Variety*, *White Hell of Pitz Palu*, *Metropolis* and *Jenny*. Scheduled for future showings are *Love of Jeanne Ney*, Oct. 1; *Sunrise and Hands*, Oct. 8; *Rhythmus 21*, *Berlin Die Symphonie Einer Grosstadt* and *Uberfall*, Oct. 15; *Emil und Die Detektive* and *Little Chimney Sweep*, Oct. 22; *M* by Fritz Lang, Oct. 29; Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, Nov. 5. Phone number for reservations, HE. 8806.



# Books: A Switch in the Book-into-Film Pattern

It isn't news, not even a random squib in this kind of professional journal, when a book is made into a motion picture. The reverse, however, is a notable piece of intelligence, as in the recent case of *Miracle on 34th Street*, and now with *My Father's House*, by Meyer Levin, which is published by Viking.

As a film, which precedes the book, *My Father's House* is the most important project of Herbert Kline, noted for his brilliant direction of documentary films. The book, although written after the film had been finished, stands with other novels, as the film will stand with other screen features, as the most incisive narrative so far of the shame and brutalization of the Jewish migrants to Palestine.

Those who know Levin from his earlier books, *Citizens* and *The Old Bunch* are aware that he is a protean but careful writer. There has been no surface-skimming either of backgrounds or of people. And in this novel there is the same bed-rock familiarity with the geography, politics and economy of the region.

In the leanest prose he has yet written, Levin shows us the country in which the inheritors of a tradition

have broken the earth, so long fallow. They are out of tears and their blood has long been shed, but the sweat is upon their brows and their muscles are as tough as their wills. No one but an old Palestine Hand could have brought this out as well, for Levin had been there as a correspondent in the days of an earlier trouble, in the 30's, when the pioneering Jews found the Arabs whipped to hostility against them.

The Arabs in *My Father's House* are the friends and neighbors of the Jewish settlers. They greet each other with "Sholom," which means peace and was old when the patriarch Abraham, their common father was a shepherd in these same hills.

The people of Levin's earlier news dispatches are here in his book. Their settlements are infused with the new generation, the survivors of Auschwitz; the ovens of Buchenwald and the massacres and synagogue-burnings of Eastern Europe. They arrive on one of the rare nights when the British searchlights are blind. And with them is the child, David, who has come to find his family.

"I wish to find my father," he says. "He told me that we could meet here,

in Palestine." Yet it never sounds as though he were saying it by rote. It is his conviction, and about as heavy a cross as a ten-year-old can bear, that his father is here—in the Holy Land.

This determination of the child to find his father, and live again in his father's house, is the spine upon which the entire narrative hangs.

The child David's odyssey from one pair of arms to another, from one house to the other, from one city to the next, and finally into the Old City of Jerusalem, is one of the most touching searches in recent fiction. At length, when the brutal truth, that his father is dead, strikes the boy, his adolescent mind is extinguished. He becomes a pathetic, thumb-sucking infant, wailing on the stones of Jerusalem for his ma-ma.

His recovery, and the restoration of hope to others among the characters who had for a long time abandoned it is magnificently related.

So, when film audiences see Kline's film, and are moved to remark, "What a fine book this picture will make," let them know that the book is already made.

G. K.

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EST.  1898

A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

AUGUST 1, 1947 TO SEPTEMBER 1, 1947

A

**FRANKLYN ADREON**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Basil Dickey, Sol Shor and Robert G. Walker) DANGERS OF THE CANADIAN MOUNTED, Rep

B

**ARNOLD BELGARD**

Sole Screenplay SECOND CHANCE, (Sol M. Wurtzel) Fox

**D. D. BEAUCHAMP**

Joint Screenplay (with William Bowers) RIVER LADY, U.I.

**HENRY BLANKFORT**

Joint Screenplay (with Max Wilk) OPEN SECRET (Marathon Pictures) Eagle Lion

**WILLIAM BOWERS**

Joint Screenplay (with D. D. Beauchamp) RIVER LADY, U.I.

**HOUSTON BRANCH**

Joint Novel Basis (with Frank Waters) RIVER LADY, U.I.

**MILLEN BRAND**

Joint Screenplay (with Frank Partos) THE SNAKE PIT, Fox

**GEORGE BRANDT**

Sole Original Screenplay UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS L 6-6 (S), Par  
Sole Original Screenplay POPULAR SCIENCE J 7-1 (S), Par

**LOU BRESLOW**

Joint Story (with John Patrick) SECOND CHANCE (Sol M. Wurtzel) Fox

C

**ADELE COMANDINI**

Sole Story THE MATING OF MILLIE, Col.

D

**SCOTT DARLING**

Additional Dialogue ROCKY, Monogram

**JACK DEWITT**

Sole Original Screenplay LOUISIANA, Mono  
Sole Screenplay ROCKY, Mono

**KAREN DE WOLF**

Joint Screenplay (with Crane Wilbur and Walter Bullock) ADVENTURES OF CASANOVA, Eagle Lion

**I. A. L. DIAMOND**

Additional Dialogue ROMANCE IN HIGH C, W.B.

**BASIL DICKEY**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Robert G. Walker, Sol Shor, Franklyn Adreon) DANGERS OF THE CANADIAN MOUNTED, Rep

E

**SAUL ELKINS**

Sole Screenplay CAMERA ANGLES (S) WB  
Sole Screenplay CRADLE OF THE REPUBLIC (S) WB  
Sole Screenplay CIRCUS TOWN (S) WB

**JULIUS J. EPSTEIN**

Joint Screenplay (with Philip G. Epstein) ROMANCE IN HIGH C, WB

**PHILIP G. EPSTEIN**

Joint Screenplay (with Julius J. Epstein) ROMANCE IN HIGH C, WB

**HARRY J. ESSEX**

Joint Screenplay (with Barbara Worth) DRAGNET (Fortune Films) Screen Guild

F

**FRANK FENTON**

Joint Screenplay (with Winston Miller) STATION WEST, RKO

**DANIEL FUCHS**

Novel Basis and Sole Screenplay THE GANGSTER (King Brothers) Allied Artists

G

**HARVEY GATES**

Sole Original Screenplay FLASHING GUNS (Great Western) Monogram

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**BENJAMIN GLAZER**

Sole Screenplay SONG OF MY HEART (Symphony Films) Allied Artists

**LEE GOLD**

Sole Story and Joint Screenplay (with M. Coates Webster) I SURRENDER DEAR, Col.

H

**GEZA HERCZEG**

Joint Story (with Ernest Lehman) END OF THE RAINBOW, Rep.

**NORMAN HOUSTON**

Sole Original Screenplay UNDER ARIZONA SKIES, RKO

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Sole Screenplay and Novel Basis MORTAL COILS, U. I.

**DICK IRVING HYLAND**

Sole Original Screenplay KILROY WAS HERE, Monogram

L

**JONATHAN LATIMER**

Joint Screenplay (with Barre Lyndon) NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES, Par.

**ARTHUR LAURENTS**

\*Contribution to Screenplay THE SNAKE PIT, Fox

**ALAN LEMAY**

Sole Screenplay TAP ROOTS, U. I.

**MARY LOOS**

Joint Screenplay (with Richard Sale) END OF THE RAINBOW, Rep.

**BARRE LYNDON**

Joint Screenplay (with Jonathan Latimer) NIGHT HAS A THOUSAND EYES, Par.

M

**LOUELLA MacFARLANE**

Joint Screenplay (with St. Clair McKelway) THE MATING OF MILLIE, Col.

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P

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R

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CURT SIODMAK: *Medium-Close Shot in Bel-Air*

JOHN S. RODELL: *Authority and the Screen Writer*

FRANCIS SWANN: *After the Ball Is Over*

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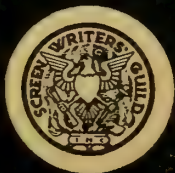
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# THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD IS FACING A CRISIS

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SHERIDAN GIBNEY  
FOR PRESIDENT OF THE  
GUILD. HE HAS NOT BEEN  
ASKED TO ENDORSE THIS  
ADVERTISEMENT.

*It is threatened by disunion in its own ranks at a time when it is under direct attack by powerful and dangerous political forces. At the same time we are entering on the struggle for the 1949 contract, which, if realized as it might be by a unified and militant Guild, could be by far the highest point that Screen Writers have yet attained. To achieve it we plead for, and will strive for, unity behind the following program:*

*We*, the candidates named on this page, stand for the vigorous development of an economic program aimed at achieving some form of percentage over and above present salaries, and at the establishment of a high minimum wage guaranteed for a considerable period.

*We* stand for licensing of material as projected under AAA, and for a movement toward gaining control of material.

*We* stand for the implementation of the resolution on the Credit Union as passed by the membership.

*We* stand for insistence on a fair participation for all writers in the industry's income from re-issues. And, without prejudice to our ultimate ends in this direction, we shall make an immediate effort, if possible in cooperation with the Directors' Guild, to press producers to apply a portion of the income from re-issues to the relief of that economic distress among writers and directors for which re-issues are so largely responsible.

*We* oppose the Taft-Hartley Act because it was created to cripple and destroy trade unions. We realize that the non-Communist affidavits are a device to divide labor against itself, and we deplore the eagerness with which certain SWG members have seized upon this dangerous weapon for election purposes, regardless of the Guild's constitutional provisions for freedom of political conscience. Ourselves, we will not NOW sign this affidavit. Should the membership decide that it is in the best interest of the Guild to go before the NLRB, we, if elected, will take whatever steps are necessary to implement that decision.

*We* repudiate the actions and procedures of the Thomas Committee on Un-American Activities as being unconstitutional. We will take every measure open to us to prevent any member of our Guild from being penalized for his opinions through the influence of this pernicious committee.

*We* stand for a unified, a progressive and a militant Guild, acting in close cooperation with other Guilds and Unions, developing its policy in full and open discussion at meetings of the membership, and loyally implementing the will of the majority.

# Letter From Venice

JUDITH PODSELVER,  
European correspondent for  
The Screen Writer, writes the  
following letter concerning the  
recent film festival in Venice.

DEAR SW: "If that Festival were being held in Bécon-les-Bruyères (the Parisian equivalent of Flatbush for a New Yorker) no one would go," that's what a French journalist had said in Paris before leaving for the Biennale in Venice.

But this Festival was held in Venice and it made all the difference. The foreign visitors were overwhelmed by the extraordinary Italian *gentilezza* of the organizers and everyone in general; they bathed at the Lido, visited numberless palaces, went on trips to the Dolomitic Alps, assisted in the historical regattas on the Grand Canal and of course, guzzled down an impressive amount of cinzano and vermouth as it is usual in festivals, with the difference that this time they were served in the open-air cafes of the Piazza San Marco. At night pictures were being projected in the courtyard of the Doges Palace and the contrast between the magnificent old setting and the pictures shown was often hard on the modern products: the sense of Beauty appeared to have dwindled down the ages.

The new pictures presented at the Biennale would not have warranted the trip. After Brussels and Locarno, before Cannes, most countries had little saved for Venice. Such a ridiculous quantity of festivals requires from each country at least 20 excellent films and four masterpieces a year. Even the American production cannot make that average. That may be the reason why the MPEA decided not to participate in the Biennale. However that step put the American films in a peculiar position, especially after

(Continued on Page 34)

# The Screen Writer

Vol 3, No. 6

NOVEMBER, 1947

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# The Thomas Committee

*The Screen Writers' Guild, individual members of the Guild, The Screen Writer magazine and the motion picture industry itself have been subjected to attack in the current hearings of the Thomas Committee on un-American Activities. The SWG attitude is a matter of record that the constitutionality and the Americanism of these procedures are dubious. As a matter of further record the Editorial Committee presents the following brief quotations:*

"A GOOD MANY CITIZENS OF HOLLYWOOD HAVE BEEN CALLED COMMUNISTS, TO THE EVIDENT DELIGHT OF MR. THOMAS AND HIS WITNESSES. . . THERE ARE, WITHOUT DOUBT, CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH SUCH AN INVESTIGATION AS THIS ONE WOULD BE PROPER. IF THE MOVING PICTURES WERE UNDERMINING THE AMERICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND MENACING IT BY THEIR CONTENT, IT MIGHT BECOME THE DUTY OF CONGRESS TO FERRET OUT THE RESPONSIBLE PERSONS. BUT CLEARLY THIS IS NOT THE CASE — NOT EVEN THE COMMITTEE'S OWN WITNESSES ARE WILLING TO MAKE SO FANTASTIC A CHARGE. AND SINCE NO SUCH DANGER EXISTS, THE BELIEFS OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO WRITE FOR THE SCREEN ARE, LIKE THE BELIEFS OF ANY ORDINARY MEN AND WOMEN, NOBODY'S BUSINESS BUT THEIR OWN, AS THE BILL OF RIGHTS MENTIONS. NEITHER MR. THOMAS NOR THE CONGRESS IN WHICH HE SITS IS EMPOWERED TO DICTATE WHAT AMERICANS SHALL THINK."

*Lead Editorial in N. Y. Herald-Tribune,  
Oct. 22, 1947.*

---

"IT IS APPARENT THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE HEARING IS TO TRY TO DICTATE AND CONTROL, THROUGH THE DEVICE OF THE HEARINGS, WHAT GOES ON THE SCREENS OF AMERICA. THIS IS NO CONCERN OF ANY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE. IT IS THE CONCERN SOLELY OF THOSE WHO PRODUCE MOTION PICTURES. IT DOESN'T REQUIRE A LAW TO CRIPPLE THE RIGHT OF FREE SPEECH. INTIMIDATION AND COERCION WILL DO IT. FEAR WILL DO IT. FREEDOM SIMPLY CANNOT LIVE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR."

*Paul V. McNutt, special counsel for the  
Motion Picture Association, Oct. 23, 1947.*

---

"MOST FAIR-MINDED AMERICANS HOPE THAT THIS COMMITTEE (THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES) WILL ABANDON THE PRACTICE OF MERELY PROVIDING A FORUM TO THOSE WHO FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES OR OTHERWISE, SEEK HEADLINES WHICH THEY COULD NOT OTHERWISE OBTAIN. MERE OPINION EVIDENCE HAS BEEN BARRED IN COURT SINCE THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL PROCEDURE WAS STARTED."

*Franklin D. Roosevelt in October, 1938.*

---

THE MOTION-PICTURE SCREEN IS AN INSTRUMENT OF ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION. HAVING BEEN PIONEERED AND DEVELOPED IN OUR COUNTRY, IT IS PECULIARLY AMERICAN. ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE AND TO INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS HAS BEEN ENORMOUS. THE MOTION-PICTURE INDUSTRY HAS ALWAYS BEEN PERMITTED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. THE IMPRESSION HAS NOW ARISEN, AND VERY NATURALLY, THAT ONE OF THE HOPED FOR RESULTS OF THE PRESSURE OF YOUR INVESTIGATION WILL BE TO INFLUENCE THE INDUSTRY TO ALTER ITS POLICIES SO THAT THEY MAY ACCORD MORE DIRECTLY WITH THE VIEWS OF (ITS CRITICS). THE INDUSTRY IS PREPARED TO RESIST SUCH PRESSURE WITH ALL OF THE STRENGTH AT ITS COMMAND.

*Wendell Willkie on the occasion of the 1941 Congressional  
investigation of the motion picture industry.*

# On Freedom of the Screen

IRVING PICHEL

*IRVING PICHEL is the distinguished motion picture director, writer and actor. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the Hollywood Quarterly.*

FOR some thousands of years, drama has alternately flourished under state or religious sanctions, then been repressed by the institutions which once sanctioned it. In Greece, in medieval Europe, in England, the theatre rose in the service of religion. In culture after culture, drama grew more secular until its sanctions were withdrawn. A Sophocles goes into exile. A Cromwell closes the theatres. An Aristotle states the high function of dramatic poetry; centuries later a Jeremy Collier sees only degradation and evil in the theatre.

Before coming to grips with the issues of freedom for the screen versus the repressions of censorship, it might be well to look honestly at our product, evaluate it from a social point of view, and then lay claim to what sanctions beyond mere popularity it has earned. Only by such a positive action can the negation of censorship be fended off. It is not enough to abide within the codes and remain merely inoffensive. It is not enough to conform to the pretense that the young will not learn to shoot if they do not see shooter and shot at simultaneously on the screen. It is not enough to eliminate from screen stories the motive of personal revenge on the ground that the motivation is fostered if exemplified in, let us say, a modern counterpart of *Hamlet*. It is not enough to attempt to appease the Legion of Decency by making a series of films (quite good ones) with Roman Catholic themes. It is not enough to eliminate all the actions, words, and implications disapproved by a thousand local censor boards or to circumvent their concepts of what may be ethically shown and talked about by the invention of innocent

looking symbols for the interdicted themes and actions. Above all, it is not enough to come to the defense of pictures like Renoir's *The Southerner* or Fritz Lang's *Scarlet Street* when they are banned in one place or another. It is necessary to define the function of the screen in terms of clear principles which will constitute an unbreachable sanction for such pictures as the two just mentioned.

That the screen, like the major output of the theatre, should divert and amuse goes without saying. That there shall be room for the meaningless, the nonsensical, the socially or aesthetically neuter, will be granted. Such diversion may justify its usefulness as escape, as time-killing, as light-hearted and salutary playfulness, with no other curbs than those imposed by such degrees of taste as their producers may have or such considerations of public decency as are listed in the ordinances of most cities in which movies are shown. They thrive, these comedies and musicals, equally well with clothes or without, without dirty jokes as well as with them. It would be worth it to concede much to the prudish in the control of these popular shows, in exchange for the exemption from their authority of pictures which have a further purpose and meaning beyond diversion. It would be worth it, but the trade will never be made, and, in all honesty it should not, because it could be made only by the surrender of such principles as we are searching for, principles which segregate the matter of public morals from the arbitrary conclusions of the incorruptibles.

These, the censors official and voluntary, are those who quite honestly refuse to admit a distinction be-



tween the story as truth and as homily. Along with all the negations of censorship, they have an affirmative point of view which, though limited, must be respected. They see dramatic fiction as an illustration of the good life, as an influence toward the wide acceptance of a proper morality, which has already been determined in the laws, religious beliefs and social conventions of their place and time.

We cannot say that this is not a laudable point of view. It has validity for all those who are capable of conforming to precept on faith,—probably a minority of human beings.

For the others, there is the dramatist. He may be a good man, a religious man, a man who has adjusted himself successfully to his society. He observes, however, that for most of his fellow men the precepts have no force, the laws do not restrain, the ethics of religion do not prevail, their desires outrun their regard for the equally demanding needs of their fellows. The dramatist, too, is concerned with the good life. He is on the same side of the fence as the censor. But he cannot take on easy faith the notion that homilies will further goodness in a world filled with evil, or, rather, he wishes to know why the homilies fail. He wants to show us the lives of humans, set forth their wilful pursuit of their self interest, and examine the dire consequences of their behavior.

**M**AKE no mistake about it, the screen like the theatre deals with human misbehavior. There can be no tragedy without a crime and it is hard to conceive of a comedy without misdemeanor, even though it may be as minor as a disproportionate estimate of the self. Both comedy and tragedy deal with the strains, the failures and readjustments of human relationships.

The causes of these disruptions may range all the way from the theologian's seven deadly sins through the jurist's list of crimes, the case worker's social maladjustments, the psychiatrist's personality disorders, to breaches of Miss Post's code of conventions. At the moment, I can think of no engaging and instructive form of conflict out of which a drama can be made of which this is not true except man's conflict with nature. And even in the prototype of this sort of story, the tale of Prometheus, nature is personified and the hero sets himself against the heavenly fiat. His punishment is that of a criminal (as may be that of the whole human race today for the impiety of its researches).

Man's enmity is against a man-like mind, opposed to his own and motivated like his. He achieves such sense of security as he can by seeking to know his

opponent, the law-giver, the law-maker, the all-powerful master and ranging himself on his side. He becomes a partisan of the gods and a guardian of the fiat, as he knows it and conceives it. So, enemies of the Will become his enemies, to be restrained or struck down on behalf of the Authority, even as the Authority would eventually himself punish if he had no delegates to do it for him.

This is something quite different from the mere codification of sins and crimes. It is the institutionalization of fear and the imaginative anticipation of penalty. Thus the great offense of Macbeth precedes and outweighs his murders of Duncan and Banquo; it is his ambition, his submission to the temptation held out by his wife's dreams of glory, the corruption of his trust in given law, his failure to range himself on the side of the established power. His story retells that of Adam who, tempted by Eve, reached for greater knowledge than he had before sharing the apple with her. Weighing the knowledge against the crime of breaking a fiat and committing a theft, he chose the knowledge.

Only a theologian can feel certain that we, Adam's descendants, would be better and happier if we were not the inheritors of his knowledge of good and evil. For Adam's crime was not simply that of theft; it was the crime of choosing to know for himself rather than accepting the law made for him.

This is not to say that our laws are not good laws. It is not to say that the tables on sins do not make sense. They do. But why they do, man must unceasingly test and relearn. As a scientist he investigates in the guise of psychiatrist and sociologist and physician. As an artist he investigates in the guise of poet, novelist, and dramatist. This is the curse of Adam upon him.

To the knowers of the law this seems absurd.

These are the consequences of crime; obey the law and escape punishment.

These are the results of sin; avoid sin and enjoy bliss.

We have been shown by myth, by history, by revelation what are the wages of sin. Why need we be shown by courts, by churches, by the ostracism of society?

Why, indeed? The paths of salvation have been marked for three thousand years. Has it not been demonstrated that those who walk them live happily? Must every man try to hack out a new way, clear away the "thorns and thistles," make errors in his engineering, and, to achieve a good ending, come back at last to the old road which lay so clearly before him from the beginning?

It appears that he must. Adam is in his constitution. His knowledge of good and evil is only in his

mind. The need to *experience* good and evil is in his blood, his nerve tissues, his capacity for thirst and hunger. Something says to him that he may be a singular refutation of apparently immutable laws. He knows the penalties of breaking the fiat of Authority; he senses also that, if the penalties can be circumvented, the rewards are enormous. He steals; if he is not discovered and punished, if he can evade the law, he has the enjoyment of wealth. He kills; if he is not found out, he has removed an enemy or a rival and his own life is easier. He takes another man's wife; if the other man or the law or the community or his conscience do not protest, he presumably enjoys his companion. He steals fire from heaven; if he is not burned in the process and does not burn up the rest of his tribe, benefits may derive to him and even to others.

IN the mind of every individual, strictly as an individual, stripped of his social relationships and his moral conditioning, (a highly theoretical individual, to be sure) sin and crime are means to desirable ends. Moreover, they are quicker and easier means, however unpleasant, to these desirable goals,—the wealth, power, fame, security, or pleasure for which the individual psyche may hunger. The risk involved in employing the means can seem worth taking, the possibility of escaping detection or punishment good, the end achieved may even in itself seem to afford, through its greatness, a protection against punishment.

The everlasting experiment and the most unvarying result are as much a part of the history of the growth of moral sense and moral knowledge in society as is the Mosaic Law, which, it is said, was revealed, or the Napoleonic Code, which was compiled. True, the accrued moral sense may lead us to deplore and decry or ridicule or, at best, pity the fate of the sinner and law-breaker without ourselves becoming sinless and law-abiding. Our morality may be generally more perception rather than practice and may come into being after the demonstrative act instead of forestalling it. To quarrel with this situation may be the proper business of the professional moralist or jurist or priest; for an artist to do so would be to ignore daily human behavior, the murders and adulteries and false witness, the wars and pillage and starvation men deal out to each other, the incessant failure of law and morals.

This failure, its causes and its consequences are the business of the theatre. In this light, the theatre is as serious in pursuit of moral purpose as the case history of the social worker or the Sunday sermon of a preacher. It hesitates to say categorically that man is bad and unredeemed; it takes the view, rather, that he is unhappy or ludicrous or pitiful, *being made as*

*he is*. If it stipulates anything in its objectivity, it might be that the tree constantly grows new fruit, that our knowledge of good and evil is not a completely certain thing and that our pursuit of our objectives cannot always be prejudged in terms of right and wrong. In a sense and to a degree, it accepts the human tendency to experiment with life as a constant more dominant than the statutes inscribed on stone and, since more dominant, less mutable and therefore, morally, more important. In other words, morals may be more subject to change than man's single desire to question, defy, and modify them.

We may now restate the function of dramatic fiction: it is to present the conflict between human desires and the curbs to their fulfillment. Whatever the curbs,—divine, legal, conventional, or merely the equally potent desires of an antagonistic human, the conflict is drama.

That the theatre and drama have been a persistent phenomenon in our culture is not due to their value as an adjunct of the other forces that deal with this same conflict,—the churches, courts, schools or armies. It is rather, I believe, because of the capacity of the spectator at a drama to jump out of the fire of his own problems into the frying pan of these fictitious ones. He can derive amusement through feeling superiority to the perplexities, distresses, even agonies of the characters in the spectacle, though his own may be actually greater. In rare instances, we may see him influenced in his own conduct by the syllogistic logic of a fable. More often, he remains deaf to analogy or feels himself exempted by the vicarious experience of a play from relating its problems to like ones he has not yet but may some day experience. I recall once suggesting to my mother that she read a novel in which there was a character in whom I thought she would see herself,—a woman who used her very phrases. With juvenile malice, I expected her to writhe with embarrassment and reform certain of her attitudes. Instead, I watched her chuckle with delight as she read the book. Finally, I asked her what she thought of the character of Mrs. So-and-so. "Wonderful!" she exclaimed. "She sounds just like Aunt Lottie."

PERHAPS because of this escape value of dramatic fiction and perhaps, in addition, because of the theatre's reluctance to advance itself seriously as an investigator of the moral meaning of human conduct, it finds itself regarded constantly as though it were one with its content, as though it were the champion, not merely the observer and commentator on frailty and misdeed. It finds itself charged by the Prynnes and Jeremy Colliers with the very immoralities it examines, though the purpose of the examination may



be gravely to "show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

Today, the comedies of Congreve, Wycherley or Farquhar are a superlatively just *precis* of the moral climate of the court and society concerning and for which they were written. So they could have been for Jeremy Collier who made the great error of confusing the plays with their content, of holding them immoral and corrupting because they dealt with immorality and corruption. They might have been the texts of sermons, the documentation of reformists. Instead, they were denounced as though they lauded the excesses and cynicism they depict.

This is the error into which censorship of the screen falls today.

Those who demand freedom of the screen are as responsible for the error as was Congreve who refused to take his plays seriously. We have not declared clearly the function we ask the screen and screen entertainment to fulfill. We totter along a wavering line between objective realism and sententious maxim. We do not know whether we intend to view life as it is or as it ought to be. We do not know whether we wish to show the world the America we live in or the America we dream about. We do not know whether our business is with wish-fulfillment or wish-denial. We do not know whether we are purveying escape from life into dreams or escape from limited lives into the expansion of life through vicarious experience. We do not know whether we are selling narcotic or stimulant. Above all, we do not know whether we intend to say that the laws of social living are to be deduced from the experience of human beings as they struggle to reconcile their conflicting desires, or intend to subscribe to and support the creeds, dicta, and prejudices of a dozen clashing formularies. We have not set up a concept of morality as clear and broad as that defined by Ralph Barton Perry:

"The essence of morality can best be understood by stating the situation out of which it arises and for which it provides a remedy. Whatever may be true of angelic beings, the interests of men and animals, living in the same space-time world, tend to collide. What one interest demands can often be obtained only at the expense of another interest. Two hungers cannot both consume the same bread, but they can want the same bread and endeavor to possess it. When two animals or men are aware of this conflict of interest, they will endeavor to exclude or dispossess one another. Their hunger is then converted into enmity, and they devote to one another's destruction the energy which was originally directed to the obtaining of food. One or both will then go hungry, and perhaps perish.

"... Morality, inserted at the point where one human interest touches another, converts their rivalry from hurtfulness into helpfulness, and thus conduces to that maximum happiness of each man which is consistent with the maximum happiness of all men. It is one of the tragic paradoxes of human life that the

institutions which men create for the sake of their happiness become separated from this end. . . . Government exists not for its own sake but for the sake of the governed, whose interests the government is designed to promote. Law exists for the freedom and security enjoyed by those who live under law, and not for the sake of legality itself, or for the benefit of the lawyer. Similarly, art, technique and learning tend to take the place of aesthetic enjoyment; in religion clericalism or ecclesiasticalism gets in the way of piety; and in education it is often necessary to remind teachers and administrators that the school exists for the benefit of the scholar. Morality is the friend of the ultimate consumer all along the line, and of all consumers—the *people* whose happiness is the ultimate criterion by which all human institutions should be judged—the people who suffer and enjoy, the people who in a mechanized, organized, and specialized world are so easily but unforgivably forgotten."\*

IN such terms as these, the sincere dramatist is also a moralist. When his medium is the screen, he uses it to a moral end. The freedom he requires is the freedom to reach conclusions of his own and promulgate them. He may come into conflict with other equally sincere moralists who have a vested interest in a particular formula,—that of Christianity or Judaism or Buddhism or the ordinances of Cincinnati, Ohio, or the diplomatic situation between the State Department and the foreign offices of Argentina or Yugoslavia or Spain or Great Britain. He is entitled to protection in these clashes. Until he claims it, on grounds of the value to society of his work and of the medium in which he works, the question of freedom of the screen is an academic one. Until it is granted, in other words, that morality changes as the needs of men change, as their demands penetrate into new areas and experiences, and is a proper subject for examination, to be observed only in the crucible of human conduct, it does not much matter to what codes the screen conforms.

We need a new Aristotle to state for our time the meaning and importance of drama. We need producers who will use the screen to increase our knowledge of ourselves. We need to draw up and to apply to our work canons of truth and social value and moral penetration. No other process can defeat the misguided, but positive, activities of censorship, which has its canons also which it believes to be true and socially valuable and morally beyond question.

The program thus far has been to seek freedom from official censorship by conformity to every local and special pressure set up by those who are guardians of the fiat, avoiding the claws of the tiger by submitting to the scratches of the cats. This can bring only victory identical with defeat.

\* *One World In the Making*, by Ralph Barton Perry, p. 44 et seq.

# Medium-Close Shot in Bel-Air

CURT SIODMAK

*SWG member CURT SIODMAK, for many years a contract writer at major Hollywood studios, is now entering the field of motion picture direction. As an engineer, novelist, newspaper man and screen writer, he has had a long experience both in Europe and the United States.*

*Illustrated by STEPHEN LONGSTREET*

THE setting is a warm summer day, after office hours. The director, a writer and a lady sit near the pool. Other guests are out of the shot. The director is tired, he had a trying day. He had to change a scene on a set, rewrote the dialogue by himself, with a little help from the dialogue director and several actors. The director is looking for a writer to work with him, someone who will sit on the set and rewrite scenes, if necessary. He has been questioning his friend about the merits of various writers. The lady says nothing.

DIRECTOR: You're a snob. Every time I mention a writer's name you say he's not the proper person for my picture. Who do you suggest?

WRITER: For you, at this stage, a craftsman. But the men you mentioned are highly individual writers who might throw your picture with their new ideas. They'll fight you, delay the shooting. And the last thing you can stand is an idea that isn't your own.

DIRECTOR: Don't be facetious. Of course I want my ideas on the screen. I should write, as I did today.

WRITER: Why don't you?

DIRECTOR: I have no time.

WRITER: There's no such thing as having no time. You know the saying—if you want to get things done, go to a busy man.

DIRECTOR: (with an indulgent smile) Well, you haven't been a director. If writers don't feel in the mood, they don't write. But if I don't feel in the mood to direct, I still have to direct—the picture has to go on.

WRITER: If you know exactly what you want, why don't you dictate the scenes to your secretary—just roughly. Any continuity writer can polish them and put them into shape.

DIRECTOR: I will, one of these days.

WRITER: May I tell you what you are? You, the actors and producers are the greatest re-writers on earth. You're great at changing scenes. Sure, it's always possible to improve a scene, find a better line, a gimmick to brighten the action. But, put any of you in a room with a typewriter, facing the greatest villain in the world—a blank sheet of yellow paper, and I bet you'd come out with nothing. Somebody has to do the spade work—good or bad. It's that first draft which is the basis of the picture, and that's the writer's job.

DIRECTOR: You are not conceited, I must say.

WRITER: No . . . not much. I'm only talking about my

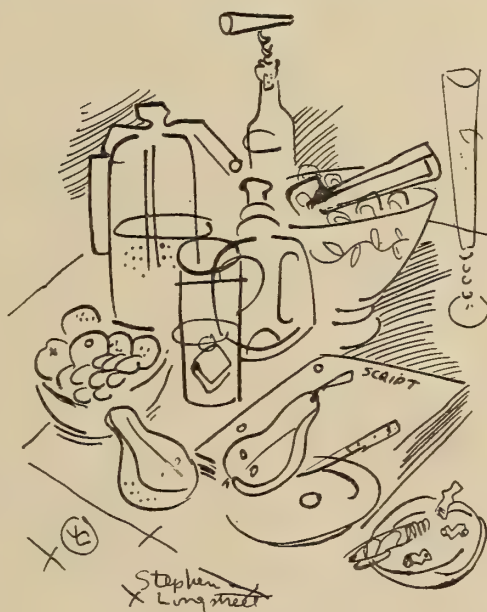
trade, a very lonely one. Lately, in story conferences, I've been asking the director not to tell me his idea of a scene, but to write it down, or dictate it to his secretary, just a one-page outline. That's not asking for much. I'm still waiting for that one page.

DIRECTOR: I mightn't have the knack of writing a script from scratch, but you must admit that I know what I want.

WRITER: Yes, of course you do—as soon as you see the script.

DIRECTOR: You know, I've a great respect for writers. A good script is very essential.

WRITER: Thank you.





THE DIRECTOR



DIRECTOR: But what is a good script? It looks different on the set than on paper. Most of you writers are inhibited directors. I bet if you'd been in my shoes today, faced with a scene that read well but would not play, you wouldn't have known what to do.

WRITER: I have never been in that predicament. But believe me, we shoot the script as we write it and we're very happy if the director can capture fifty per cent of the mood and action on the screen. Of course, some directors are geniuses—I'd say half a dozen in this town—improve the script in directing it. And you're one of them.

DIRECTOR: There's no need to flatter me, my boy. I can name many writers who were flops when they became directors and learned proper respect for my job. What you get back from the screen is reflection of character, not only of the actors, but mostly of the director. The more personal energy a director puts into his work, the more it reflects on the screen. That is why an insipid director makes an insipid picture, even with the best actors and a good script.

WRITER: Well, your assumption is that a director with a great personality has a chance to make a really good picture.

DIRECTOR: That's right.

WRITER: That's plausible vindication of your pro-

fession. I'll take that into consideration when I write my next script.

DIRECTOR: Why do most writers dislike directors . . . is it professional jealousy?

WRITER: Partly. After a while the successful director, to show his own skill, subordinates the script and the actors.

DIRECTOR: I don't follow.

WRITER: You personally dislike working with stars—and you're not the only one. Why? Because a star, with his outstanding personality and fixed, well-known mannerisms subjugates your importance. That is why you like competent but unknown actors whom you can mold into a pattern, force to act in a certain way to create on the screen an exact replica of the character you have in mind.

DIRECTOR: What's wrong with that?

WRITER: Nothing, if you do it properly. But more important than that you also try to break down the writer and his story.

DIRECTOR: I beg your pardon.

WRITER: But you do. During my long years in the business I learned that I'm not writing for the screen.

THE WRITER



I try to guess what you and the producer have in mind and write a script, knowing you have no precise conception of what you want. Only by trial and error, by writing first what you don't want, by the process of elimination, do we finally arrive at the script you accept. One day a well-known producer told me: *I don't know what I want. But when we have it we'll all know.*

DIRECTOR: Of course I have to see the story on paper. But you will admit I always come across with good, constructive ideas.

WRITER: But everybody has good suggestions to make. The elevator boy at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel . . .

DIRECTOR: You can stop right there.

WRITER: (honestly) Don't you see

how much I envy you? Our job is never finished. There's always a better line, a scene that can be improved. The mathematical problem starts from nothing and ends in the infinite. But, if you have time and money you can look at the scene you shot the day before and if you don't like it, do it again differently. The actor can look at himself on the screen and improve his action. But we're lost the day we start. We can never prove that we're right, because your interpretation takes concrete shape on the screen, ours always remains abstract.

DIRECTOR: You're very pessimistic, my boy. The play's the thing.

WRITER: Even that is a misquotation from Shakespeare. I really don't know what can be done about it. I think the writer should be on the set during the shooting, to assure unity of style and mood which is of prime importance in picture making. Or he should be a writer-director or a writer-producer. But not like

a piece of a jigsaw puzzle that is picked up at random to see if he fits a spot. That is why your suggestion for a writer to come on a picture in the middle of shooting, is all wrong. That is why you need a non-descript person—and there are many around, a tool you can direct as you direct your actors.

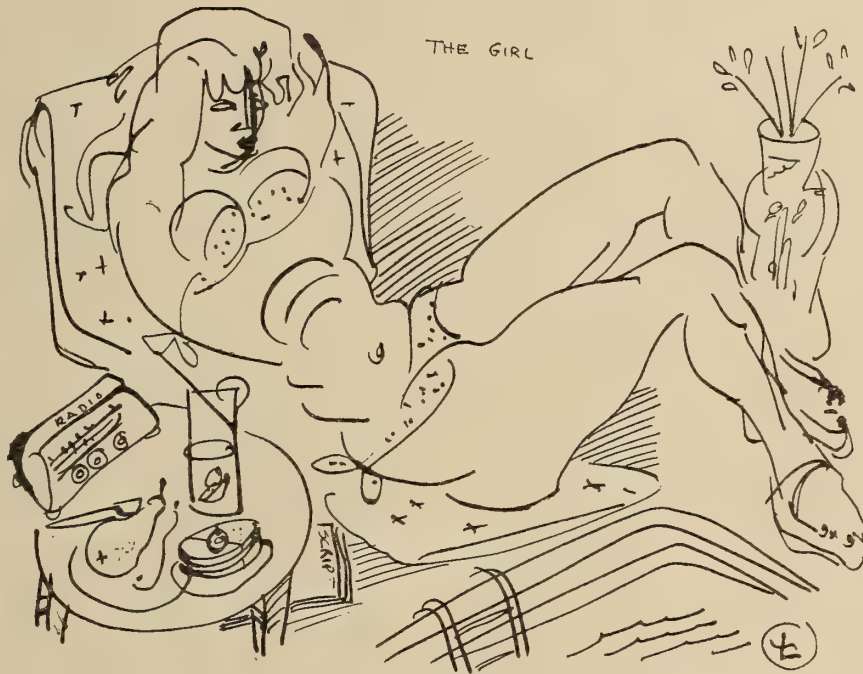
DIRECTOR: (with a grin) Well,

how about you working with me on the picture?

WRITER: I'm not free. I'm between two lay-offs at the moment.

The lady in the background has listened to this conversation with great enjoyment, a smile on her face. Now she gets up. She is very good looking, with an alluring figure and charming manners.

LADY: May I say a word to end your futile conversation? I always hear the words 'director' and 'writer' mentioned. I can solve the issue for both of you easily. Put me in every scene and the picture will be a success!





# Authority and The Screen Writer

JOHN S. RODELL

*SWG member JOHN S. RODELL, for many years a playwright in New York, is now in Hollywood where he is writing the screenplay of a classic Norwegian drama for David O. Selznick.*

**T**O a man from Mars or New York, there is something very strange about the Hollywood writer's pervading sense of unrest and dissatisfaction. It runs through the symposiums at Lucey's and the SWG meetings and the pages of this magazine, and although it takes many shapes, I have come to the conclusion that it has really little to do with the tangibles of salary, working conditions, employment and the like.

It seems almost as though screen writers generally would like to be something else, not screen writers at all. There seems to be a feeling that the job, the very profession of screen writing itself, is somehow unworthy. This is something I have never encountered during a considerable experience with creative people in art, music, theatre and literature. And on another level, I doubt that it can be found among coal miners, or bankers.

As a result, screen writers are engaged in a constant effort to make of their job something—not better—but different altogether. They are trying constantly—but to improve it—but to get away from it. They would become directors, producers, executives, or a vague something-else-again called film authors; they would adopt horrid hybrid shapes such as writer-directors (which Raymond Chandler has nicely called the turn on); they would be writer-producers (which symbolize a confusion of employer-employee status probably unique in the whole field of guilds and unions—people who hire writers sitting in membership with the writers who are hired).

And as if this weren't enough, there is the constant yearning in the hearts of screen writers to be novelists or playwrights—quite irrespective of whether they actually have a novel or a play to write.

What all of this represents is a reaching for greater authority, and the prestige in one's own eyes and the recognition in the eyes of others that greater authority confers. But by what virtue does the average screen writer claim this authority he is so unhappy without? I think it ought to be examined more realistically,

with a view to determining if he hasn't actually got quite as much authority, prestige, recognition as he deserves. And I shall be referring to fundamentals, now—not to specific items such as the billing of the screen writer's name. I feel that much of the prepossession with such items has been the result of a stubborn failure to get the whole screenwriting picture in proper perspective.

There are two kinds of authority to be differentiated from each other and looked at separately. The first, which might be called simply executive authority, is the kind inherent in any responsible position in a commercial enterprise, whether it be film studio or a cigarette factory. The confusion that resides here, relative to screen writers, is the result of their being among the most highly salaried employees in the world—which appears to obscure the fact that, within the framework of the big business of movie making, employees is nevertheless what they are. I mean employees as opposed to executives. I mean order takers as opposed to order givers. I mean carriers-out of policy, not policy makers. The screen writer, whether he is hired to work on his own story or a story written by two other guys, or to “develop an original” (strange neologistic jargon covering a creative paradox) remains, in his characteristic form and function, an employee.

But a director seems to have a little more authority, so—regardless of specific qualifications—let's be writer-directors. And the producer is really a person of authority, so let's get to be producers. And after that, what's to prevent our going onward and upward, and becoming the real thing—the studio executives, the boys in the Front Office? Well, nothing. That is, if being a director, or a producer, or a studio executive is what your talent is for, and is what you want to be, and what you can get to be. If it's progressively impressing your superiors-in-business with your capacity to handle bigger and bigger business assignments, all directed toward the responsibility of selling more and more cigarettes to the public (or seats at the box office, no difference)—by all means go to it. But at this

point, admitting you've got the authority you've been wanting, a question arises. What has it to do with screen writing?

To answer this by saying that the writer thereby gains control over what he has written is fallacious. In the very nature of the motion picture industry—here and now—it is literally not the writer's business to say what he has to say. It is his business to help to say what executives want said. And no amount of straining or maneuvering can alter this. The only thing that could alter it would be a complete revolution in the set-up of the industry. (Do we not admit this when we point out how hopeless it would be for writers to exercise a subversive effect on pictures, subversive-minded as they might nevertheless be?) And I would go further. I would say that, in a fundamental sense, this is as it should be. My reasons for saying so will be apparent in what follows.

A DISCUSSION of the second kind of authority treads on tenderer ground. This is creative authority—the authority of the creative artist in relation to his work. Despite occasional abridgements, and attempts to curtail it, it has never been successfully curtailed. Through the years it has never been seriously questioned. One is tempted to define this authority, in fact, by saying that you are a creative artist if you have it, and if you haven't you're not. It is the authority which prevents an art gallery from tampering with a painting it has accepted for hanging; that forbids a conductor to delete a passage, or alter a single note in a symphony; that prohibits a manager from changing the lines of a play. (Proper perspective will show, incidentally in regard to this latter prohibition, that it was not invented by the Dramatists' Guild, but merely enunciated and formalized. It seems obvious that a similar right in relation to screen writers would have been enunciated long ago by the SWG—if it existed. But it doesn't. Of this, more later.)

This creative authority is, in the last analysis, merely the creative artist's prerogative to say exactly what he pleases, exactly as he pleases, retaining full responsibility, praise, blame or whatever, for having said it. Of course he also has to assume the burden of getting somebody to listen. But this is part of his bargain, and is quite understood. Now here is the second authority the screen writer lacks—and longs for. But why should he have this one either? Has he made the creative artist's bargain? Has he paid his price? Of course not.

The price of artistic authority is to work for nothing, at the risk of never gaining any reward at all; to take the risk of never being paid, never being heard, never being seen. It's working in travail, in silence, in doubt

and anxiety and alone. It's having your own conception, not borrowing someone else's; your own gestation, not the story conference's; and your own delivery, though it kill you. None of this idea is new. It is as old as art itself. But it is also as true, and as necessary to say. And it tells why the screen writer hasn't earned this authority either, this even greater carrier of prestige and self-esteem.

Art is long, and these are the long artistic truths, and they are elementary. But in the light of them, how is one to assess such a statement as the one on page 12 of *The Screen Writer* for May, 1947, that "As in the case of the composer with his opera and the playwright with his play, the screenwriter contributes the motion picture"? Does anyone mean seriously to say that the screenwriter contributed *The Informer*, *The Long Voyage Home*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, *The Lost Weekend*? There are novelists and playwrights who would honestly wonder what this man was talking about, and I do too. There are directors, photographers, art directors, film editors too, who would wonder. Why do screen writers keep stretching for these untenable positions to put their egos on? The truth is that, by its very nature, the motion picture is a form which lends itself to contribution by a single person only once in a thousand times, when the one person is a genius.

Let us make a more realistic comparison of the relative "contributions" of the screen writer and the playwright or the composer. It will be said that, for instance, though a play has a director, no one requires the playwright to share his creative authority with him—or indeed to subordinate it—as the screen writer is required to. But there is a categorical difference here. The director of a play is often spoken of as "staging" it; the phrase "staged by" is often used; and this suggests already that it is a highly limited function: the director puts the play on the stage—but the play existed prior to him, and prior to his function. It was born before him. What he does is merely to see that it is properly exhibited. He, the scene designer, and all the others concerned with exhibiting the play, are actually just following the intentions—the orders—of the playwright.

ONLY when the motion picture is actually in the can, and ready for shipment to the exhibitor, has it reached the stage that the play has reached when the playwright has finished with it. The motion picture isn't born yet, until the director, the photographer, the composer, the editor are finished with it. Whoever doubts this should imagine a simple test: Let the final



shooting script of any given screenplay be given to five different studios for shooting—each with its A unit and its best facilities, and on the same budget. Can there be the slightest doubt that five entirely different motion pictures would emerge—whose differences would transcend completely and categorically the differences in personality of the actors employed?

In the theatre, or in music, this simply is not the case. You can have better or worse Shakespeare or Beethoven. But it is still Hamlet, and it is still the Eroica. Though Gielgud play it, though Toscanini play it, the play is Shakespeare's play and the symphony is Beethoven's symphony. In the strictest creative sense, they give no latitude. No good playwright does, and no good composer does. But the best screen writer does, because he has to, and he has to because he is

not, in strictest truth the creative artist, and this is the authority he may not have, though he cry for it through Lucey's to the moon.

The man from Mars or New York would suppose, when confronted with this torment, that the job of being a screen writer was not only unworthy, but humiliating, unrewarding and—unchallenging. I think it is none of these things, and I think the state of mind which so considers it reveals an unrealistic attitude toward its environment and—more deeply—a pretentious attitude toward itself. At the moment, the job of being a screen writer is one thing before it is anything else. It's hard to get. That this has distorted many writers' views of it may be understandable. But the facts of life and of the screen writer's limited authority remain as they were, and should be.

## On the Lot

ROSE HARRIS

THE red bulbs buzz and twirl,  
Signifying the temporary imprisonment  
Of a creative troupe.  
Outside, in the large afternoon,  
An extra phones in an open booth  
A messenger pulls in her stomach  
And wets her lips;  
An electrician travels through  
His world of outlets on a bike . . .  
Outside, the delicate pink flowers  
Sway lightly in their green stations;  
Music escapes beneath a door . . .

Inside, the creative troupe  
Fights time and flesh —  
(Productive costs,  
The director's headache,  
The actor's profile) —  
And boredom and  
The complexities of outside . . .  
Will the intricate expensive mechanics  
Add up in gold? How much for who?  
And what about the tax? And  
Christ—what do the papers say? Hey —  
Somebody comb the leading lady's hair!

*The messenger waits for the red bulbs  
To stop, wets her lips again,  
And enters. Could it be now?*

# A Study of the German Screen

HERBERT G. LUFT

HERBERT G. LUFT is an associate member of SWG. Now writing for the screen in Hollywood, he was a member of the German film industry in the pre-Hitler period and was later confined in a Nazi concentration camp.

*Heaps of rubble, fragments of a façade against the darkened sky, battered steel helmets, graves at the curb—the Apocalypse of a dying town—Berlin 1946. The vast railroad station is a mere skeleton—only the huge steel frame stands. A train arrives, its human cargo crowded to the head of the engine. The hall spews out a mass of tired, frenzied, perplexed newcomers. Groups of ragged war prisoners thread their way through the thick of the crowd. They are home, at last! The camera pans up to a poster, tacked to a cracked stone wall. It shows a beautiful landscape, the inscription reads: VISIT OUR BEAUTIFUL GERMANY.*

This is the Prelude to the first post war picture, *Die Moerder Sind Unter Uns*, produced in the UFA Neubabelsberg studios, now under Russian supervision. The film was given a gala opening at the Berlin Staats Opera.

FOR the twelve years of Hitler's regime, the record of the once notable German film industry is a record of shame. Artists of stage and screen, only too eagerly, walked into the Fascist camp. Actors and poets appeared on the streets of Berlin in SA uniforms, collected money for party funds, spoke against racial and religious minorities.

Early in 1933, plays like *Schlageter*, Moeller's version of *Rothschild Siegt Bei Waterloo*, Hans Johst's Nazified *Thomas Paine*; propaganda films such as Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex*, (with Heinrich George); the *Horst Wessel* picture; Ritter's *Helden*—all kinds of chauvinistic and anti-Semitic films, flooded the market. German philosophers kept busy cementing tailor-made ideas, to suit the needs of the party machinery, while the movies tried to keep up with the changing spirit of the time.

At the outbreak of World War II, the German film production full-heartedly geared into a campaign

of hatred. Emil Jannings, in his *Oehm Krueger*, demonstrated the evils of British imperialism. Veit Harlan made his infamous *Jude Suss* picture. While the earlier products still show a high technical standard, written with a poisonous pen, but well executed, the pictures of the later period are distinguished only by a complete lack of creative spirit. *Victory in the West* (1941) is a poor attempt to justify the invasion of France and the low countries.

Germany, which gave us scenario writers like Hans Kraly, Carl Mayer and Norbert Falk; directors of the stature of the late F. W. Murnau, Fritz Lang and G. W. Pabst, filed intellectual bankruptcy long before its surrender. There is only one exemption: out of the obscurity of a concentration camp came one Leopold Lindtberg, who for the Wechsler company in Switzerland, made two of the most inspiring movies, *The Last Chance* and *Marie Louise*.

When the Allies entered Berlin, the Neubabelsberg and Tempelhof studios were bombed out. But several ventures in Munich, headed by Jannings, Hartl and Willy Forst, limped along. All the American commander could do was to close the gates of the Geiselsteig studios. The spirit was dead already.

The spirit of the German film pioneers had died with the establishment of human death factories.

OUT of the chaos emerged a new, rather superficial impulse for creative arts, literature and the theatre. Not an honest desire to understand the world came along, only an urge to forget the trouble of the day. Since the Germans are completely unmindful of their guilt, nothing was done to exclude those who had served the Third Reich.

The *Deutsche Theatre* in the Schumannstrasse and over thirty other stage shows in Berlin reopened. They gave an evil example. Today, the stars of the German and Austrian stage are the same Nazis we have cursed so often. Gustav Gruendgens is back, Kranuss and



Wegener, but anti-Fascists like Ernst Busch are regarded as outcasts.

AS to the world of films, three important productions have come out of Berlin since 1946. The most honest among the directors is Gerhard Lamprecht. In many of his social pictures in the pre-Hitler period (Zille film etc.), he had made himself champion of the underprivileged. His new film deals with the re-education of German youth.

Werner Klinger, last year, shot in the Johannisthal studios and in the slums of the metropolis, *Razzia*, a study of the Berlin underworld. The third production is headed by Wolfgang Staudte, before 1933 an actor on a collective stage. He rose with the regime and managed to survive. His picture, *Die Moerder Sind Unter Uns*, is the subject of current discussion. It is typical of the German mind.

*The awakening of a sense of guilt within a people.* What a theme, what a premise for a picture! But wait! We are mistaken in our assumption that the Germans would ever admit any collective guilt! A mere glimpse of the theme flashes on the screen, the *one and only* incidental case of one sadist. Opposite the "heavy" appears the pure "German hero," who during the war was an innocent bystander to the murder of some villagers in the east. This crime, evidently the only one ever committed, must break our hero's heart! How can he marry his girl, before he has punished the villain?

The story is vague, apologetic. The hospital doctor (Ernest Stahl-Nachbaur) phrases it by saying: "It was the war."

So crime against humanity, attacked in spots, is somewhat excused in the final analysis. They do not dare admit that killing was *not* just forced upon the Nazis by the cold necessity of war. We know only too well from our experience, that mass murder of unarmed civilians was their leisure habit since 1933—the state of mind of *Volk* and *Fuehrer*.

In spite of shortages, insufficient lighting and lack of facilities, this DEFA film, technically, is a masterpiece of craftsmanship. With only one lens, cameraman Friedel Behn-Grund caught the breath of the city. Director Staudte shows a remarkable understanding of the motion picture medium. The scenes in Mondschein's optical shop, the chess game which becomes a battlefield, silhouettes of neighbors at the staircase spreading gossip, tears wetting bread crumbs, raindrops falling on the sidewalk—a wide range of the hopelessness of life and death.

The cutting is clever, a rather cynical contrast in the continuity. A child's operation in a dusty attic, dissolves to a vulgar nightclub atmosphere. Over the Christmas tree and choir we flash back to the scene of the murder.

Hildegard Knef, the new star of Germany is, perhaps, a good actress. But what we need and should expect from a free German screen is more honesty. Not all their pictures can deal only with the problem of war guilt. But we hate to see a saccharine love story interwoven into a theme which not only concerns the Germans but the whole world.

We hope that our Eric Pommer, who has a cleaner conscience, will master the new German production in the American zone with a clearer mind.



## Guy de Maupassant Understood the AAA Idea

*The lease rather than the outright sale of literary property rights may seem revolutionary in 1947 to publishers and producers, but in 1882 it seemed a commonsense business arrangement to Guy de Maupassant. Following is an excerpt from a letter he wrote to a publisher, Georges Charpentier, on Nov. 28, 1882:*

"... If I were to sign a contract with you I should do so on the terms that govern the publication of my books by others. Here they are:

"Royalty of 40 centimes a copy on the first 2000 copies.

"Royalty of 1 franc a copy in excess of 2000 copies.

*"At the end of six years I become free to dispose of my books as I please.*

"I retain the right to bring out illustrated or de luxe editions of my book whenever I please and with any publisher of my choice.

"These terms have proved very advantageous to me, and I am not disposed to amend them. . ."

# Kindergarten of Authors' Economics

THEODORE PRATT

*THEODORE PRATT is a novelist and Broadway dramatist. His article, Authors Become Aware They Have Economics, was featured in the American Authors Authority Supplement published by The Screen Writer. As a creator of many valuable literary properties, including the recent novel, Miss Dilly Says No, he has given consistent support to the AAA plan.*

HAVING been exercised about the discrepancies in authors' economics for longer than the lifetime of AAA, but having latched on the idea of AAA as an excellent means of ironing out those discrepancies, I have been fighting for it steadily. Every time I run into a fellow author, or search one out purposefully, I talk it up and show him a copy of the *AAA Supplement of The Screen Writer*. I have done this all the way from New England to Florida, between which I commute winters and summers, and among general writers of all kinds, ranging from best-sellers to beginners. The reception I have had might be of interest to headquarters.

A good deal of this reception still makes me shudder. The first premise of it is that the AAA has been tagged cruelly. It was tagged by Louis Bromfield, John Erskine & Company when they went on the front page of the *New York Times* and got themselves presswired at the first mention of AAA, branding it Communist before they could possibly fully understand its terms. This I regard as the foulest blow below the belt ever delivered at authors' economics. Its influence, together with their formal working against it since, has caught on far more popularly than the idea of obtaining equity for writers in their work.

At present, at the mere mention that I am in favor of AAA, I find myself suspected of being everything from a Communist to a Fascist to an anarchist to a union racketeer. It doesn't do much good to try to convince anyone that I am a fervent admirer of the capitalist system on the simple basis that my country has done somewhat better in the matters of freedom of thought and action, to say nothing of a standard of living, than those under other systems. These days, I am informed, the reddest red can parade under such a deceptive guise. And didn't this AAA thing start in the Screen Writers' Guild, which everybody knows is a wholly Communist organization?

When trying to lay this one, from my experience

at working in Hollywood and knowing that in the Guild, as in other such organizations, there are Communists free to believe their religion, but not making the entire organization nor its direction Communist, I only mire myself deeper in getting suspected. Been to Hollywood, have you? Sold yourself out, that's it. I doubt if many members of the Screen Writers' Guild can possibly be aware of how widespread and deeply engraved is the belief that they are directed straight from Moscow. This is a part of the dreadful public relations all of Hollywood has obtained for itself.

THIS makes talking for the AAA tough sledding. I speak to authors in another direction, suggesting that we consider not the source of AAA, but what it is for its own sake, and how it might operate to their benefit. I ask—I have also had to plead—that writers read the *Supplement*. To get one writer to read it I actually had to promise not to try to talk him into it afterward. I kept my promise. He returned the *Supplement* without comment. To this day I don't know how he feels. If he realized in only small content my personal opinion of him, after this vaudeville act, he would drop dead.

A few, a very few, catch the idea, say it would be a good thing, and half-promise to support it if ever put into operation.

A few more half-approve, but have their doubts. These range all the way from timidity to not being able to read straight. One fairly well-known novelist, after reading the *Supplement*, which certainly explains things in ABC form, asked me: "But supposing the Authority does not like my writing, either for literary or political reasons, and refuses to handle my work?"

Most can't get over the hump that as soon as the Authority might be established, they believe a pressure group would seize power and from there out boycott



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or direct them. It does not seem that they can be made to understand that any AAA on which this was tried would disintegrate instantaneously.

One very prominent novelist told me straight out: "If any such thing as the AAA comes into being, I will stop writing." When gently pressed for reasons, the novelist said that she did not think writers should be unionized. She refused to give any consideration to the fact that composers and dramatists have for some time been effectively unionized and that she herself has profited in the terms of her picture sales from the existence of a matter called the Screen Writers' Guild. She, by the way, was reached by Messrs. Bromfield and Erskine before I got to her; they arrived first and evidently better.

THE naivete among many writers about their business matters I previously knew to be little less than colossal. Upon trying to spread the word of AAA I found that word totally inadequate. Even appalling is a mere diminutive to define it. One writer said to me, "I've always been treated fairly; why, my publisher pays me a royalty of ten per cent." He had never read any other part of his contracts and had evidently never bothered to compare notes with another writer. He was all too typical in unconsciously congratulating himself on being a sap.

There is a type of lady novelist I can see no way whatsoever of winning over. She is smug and self-satisfied from a middling or huge success, frequently quite accidental. She looks around at her not nearly so successful sisters, and asks herself why she should join any organization where she will, as she believes, have to associate or be classed with such inferior creatures. No, on the AAA, a thousand times no! She'll go her queenly way, being the lioness at twittery feminine gatherings where she is really appreciated.

The one that got me most of all, however, and left me feeling as if a steam roller had just passed over me, was this: A middle-aged writer of considerable success allowed that she thought the AAA might be a good thing in a general way, but she was afraid of "giving up" her precious copyrights. When it was more fully explained, but I am sure not entirely accepted, that the dangers in this were not nearly as large as she pictured them, she proposed:

"I'll tell you: You and the others get it started, then if it works all right, maybe I'll join."

At this point I decided to stop trying to sell my friends on AAA, because if I didn't I would have no more friends. I am exhausted, bewildered, shaken, deflated, and full of wonder about the make-up of that God-damnedest creature of them all, the author. In my dizziness, I have evolved a theory: It is this:

Many years ago someone announced to the world of authors at large that they were bad business men. Ever since then they have believed it. It has become a part of the credo of being a writer. Conversely, the meaning has become that if you are a good business man you can't very well be a good writer.

That is only the beginning of my theory, the basis on which it stands (though I would prefer it to wobble). Living with the above belief, it is very easy to take solace in it when the writer fails to be very successful. He tells himself that he is not supposed to make money (and very often has been influenced by the rule into not making it). Into this cozy situation of alibi came the AAA. It proposed a way (which seems far too sensible ever to be adopted within the next century), whereby the author could automatically, in spite of himself, become a good business man, or at least obtain better receipts for himself in improved conditions. If such were put into effect, the author would have removed from his usage the only self-sustaining reason he has for failing.

Who, in such a populous category, could possibly be in favor of the AAA?

I AM serious, entirely so, tragically so. At this stage, bloody and bowed, I have but one question to ask: Are general writers ready for AAA? My answer, based upon my experience of battling for it, would seem to be that they are not, unless someone will establish a kindergarten in authors' economics, using a heavy wooden mallet to hit them over the head to pound in the simple facts of their business lives.

I hope, I pray that I am wrong. In my hope and prayer, after desisting from trying to convince my friends, I have taken to trying to operate the kindergarten, holding mallet behind me and forcing myself not to use it. How long I can restrain myself I have no means of knowing.

# After the Ball Is Over

FRANCIS SWANN

*SWG member Francis Swann, recently under contract at Warner Bros., is a playwright and fiction writer. He is now readying a play for early Broadway production.*

**A**FTER years, your contract finally expires at the studio, and you breathe deeply—now you have a chance to sit down and really write! You think gleefully of that fat file you've been adding to all this time—that play you started a long time ago; those short stories you made notes for; those stories you pigeonholed mentally; all of this because of that "exclusive service" clause in your very exclusive, all-inclusive contract.

But first, you haven't had a vacation in God knows how long, and you have \$6.57 saved up. So you call your agent and give him strict instructions that you don't want to work in a studio for at least three months . . . you've got too much stored away in that fertile brain of yours, and you simply must put it all down on paper.

Naturally he protests with loud screams of anguish. "Jees, man, you ought to hit while you're hot!"

"Nuh-uh, not this baby."

So you loaf around the house for awhile. That is, you think you're going to loaf around. First thing is your wife says, "Well, it's about time! There's a lot to be done around here."

A couple of weeks later you decide it might be easier sitting at the typewriter, so you give out with that inspirational talk about having some ideas you don't want to let slip away from you. You go into your office, or den, or hall closet, and sit. You glance lovingly at the file, which in all probability consists of an old hat box, and with due reverence you lift the lid.

Surely there are enough ideas and notes in it to keep you busy for years.

First of all, the play . . . but on second thought, a play is something that takes a lot of time, and what you want to do is get out some quick short stories and re-establish the market.

Hah—item one—the very thing! Let's see now. "*Story about a guy who marries a Wave Lieutenant,*

*and . . .*" But that's dated. Better start off with something fresh.

Item two: "*Story about a fellow who hates dames in business and treats them like . . .*" But no—you remember now, that was the thing you used when you were stuck on that last script you did. Saved a hell of a lot of work, too.

Item three: "*Bill decides Susan is spoofing, and . . .*" That one doesn't make sense—must belong with some other note somewhere. You'll run across it later, after you've lost the part you just found.

Item four: "*Guy who is in the advertising business and works for a fat man meets an English gal (war widow), and they fall in love . . .*" Hey, wait—somehow it sounds familiar, and you get indignant. You wonder how Metro got access to your private files.

Item five: This turns out to be an old magazine that got into the hat box by mistake. You glance through it idly. Well, that's why it was in there—had one of your stories in it! After reading the story over a couple of times, you decide it wasn't so bad. This naturally leads you to read all the other stories—purely for comparison of course.

**T**HIS same sort of process may go on for days or even into some of those precious months you've allowed yourself. You may even get something written, but it's a long time via U. S. Mail to your New York agent to the editor or editors back to your agent back to you. And in the meantime, why not fiddle around with that play?

Act One is pretty well complete, and even some pages in Act Two. You wonder what ever made you stop. Why wasn't the masterpiece completed, and why aren't you earning the royalties on it now? Reading it over it sounds foolproof—and won't be too much work either. So you plunge in without even putting a little toe in first to see how cold the water is.

Maybe four weeks later you find out why the play



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was never finished. Oh, yes—now you remember: the complications in Act One made it kind of tough in Act Two which made it completely impossible in Act Three. Oh, well—there are lots more ideas.

But—something unforeseen has happened. The \$6.57 you had put away for this literary splurge has dwindled alarmingly to a mere 57 cents. Something must be done. That original you had in mind. The very thing! But first you better check the market with your agent. You call him.

"Who?" he says.

You repeat your name—the full name this time—and he shouts with joyful recognition. "Man, when did you get back in town?"

Icily you inform him that you never left town.

"Oh," he says, his tones changing from the wedding march to the funeral dirge—that professional mortician's voice. "Man, things have been tough all over. You know if anything had come up . . ."

This time you turn the frosting department up several notches. "Three months ago I informed you I did not want to work."

"Oh," he says brightly with a mental resolve to add 3 cents to the Christmas gift for your wife next year—this for giving him such an easy out. Then he talks mournfully about depressions, recessions, British taxes, communists, backlogs, strikes, sitdowns, shut-downs, and on and on in that same general vein. There is also the spiel about rising costs. Eggs have gone up; butter is sky high; carpenters are expensive; electricians get much more. In short, everything has gone up except your income, which at the moment is zero.

So you break that resolve made at a more lucrative

time. You tell your agent you might even consider working for radio.

"Radio?" he says as though he had never heard of the medium. "Oh, radio! Why man, you should be in New York!"

Out of your cash reserve of 57 cents you take the Chief to New York. There your representative advises you, "Why, man, most of the shows are moving out to the West Coast. That's where you ought to be to cash in."

**B**Y now your resources have dwindled to practically nothing, so you decide to blow the whole works in on a wild time. Naturally the wildest thing a writer can do is to buy a ticket and go in to see a movie. It's a glamorous movie house with lots of bright lights and neon signs advertising Joe Glutz and Sadie Himmelpuss in *George Hates Polly*, produced by Albert Without, directed by Henry Leftout, music by Himmelmar Out, cinematography by Charles Rideout, color by you know who.

After one reel, it begins to seem vaguely familiar; after another reel you remember—it's a remake of an original you sold to Stupendous Pictures, who in turn sold it to Gigantic Pictures at a profit, and they in turn have made it three times. Once it starred a horse, then a comedian, and now it's a saga of the South Seas. But it's still the same story.

You walk thoughtfully out of the theatre, counting the three cents left in your pocket, and you think to yourself—or at least you *should* think—"What if I hadn't sold that original outright? What if I had leased it . . . ?"

That's the \$64,000,000 question.

*The Screen Writers' Guild noted with regret the passing last month of Samuel Hoffenstein, noted poet, playwright and screen writer. In a resolution by the Executive Board on October 13th, addressed to the surviving relatives of Mr. Hoffenstein, the Board expressed the condolences of his 1,300 colleagues.*

# You Can't Scare the Movies

WILLIAM ORNSTEIN

*WILLIAM ORNSTEIN is a New York magazine editor who has had long experience as a motion picture publicist, and as an editor and reporter on film industry trade publications. He is the author of many magazine articles and short stories.*

**N**OW that television is making rapid strides and the future looks bright for its place in the sun in the entertainment field the natural question would be, "What about the movies? What of its future in light of radio's successor?"

Frankly, the motion picture has nothing to fear from television and the experience the flicker industry countered when radio shed its swaddling clothes will again be repeated when television makes its grandstand play. The motion picture industry has quite a few ideas up its invisible sleeve and they will come to light as time and industry in general permits.

Let's not doubt for a minute the importance of television in days to come. All the great plays will be televised to the satisfaction of devotees of the theatre and cultural arts. Radio shows, in the main, will be shown on a screen in homes, so that you will be able to see as well as hear what is taking place in the studio. Practically every great news event will come to you in your home direct from the scene of action. These and more will be the order of the day in the new cycle of television and Frequency Modulation.

But suppose you miss one of the programs, what then?

Unless a motion picture record has been made of the show or event as it took place you simply will be out of luck. In other words television is a one-shot affair; you either dial in when the event is taking place or have to depend on another means of seeing the show. That's where the motion picture cannot be replaced. The film is a permanent record and if you have had the good fortune to visit the Museum of Modern Art in New York you have had the opportunity of witnessing motion pictures as far back as twenty, twenty-five and thirty years ago.

Another sober factor that cannot be denied the movies is the feature of relaxation. Millions of people insist on getting out of their homes regardless of what is on the radio or what is being televised, so they can sit in the luxurious quiet and comfort of a theatre and enjoy a scheduled program. This not only holds true for

women but also for the men who return home from a hectic day at the office and do not want to stay at home. They want to get out and enjoy themselves. And unless they have something on the tapis at home for the evening the first thing that comes to mind is, "Let's go to a movie."

As you read this you may say, "How true this is!" Then again you may say otherwise, but let's prove our case.

Although there's never been an accurate "official" check on the number of people who attend movies each week let's say there are fifty millions. This is very conservative since published reports from various so-called authentic sources and polls have estimated as high as ninety millions. By deducting forty millions it is safe to say that the fifty million left is far greater—at least by twenty million—than the number of listeners to the top radio show today.

Of this fifty million you can imagine how many men and women go to the movies each week "just to get away from the house" and "to relax."

There are many problems yet to be solved by television before the industry can boast of a nation-wide hookup, to be followed by an international fanning out, as it were. At the moment one method or another, too technical and involved to dwell on at this time, the maximum range of television is not greater than 500 miles at best. In due time there is every reason to believe there will be several national and international networks operating on the same order as radio today. Television is growing and when it becomes man-size the motion picture industry will have rehabilitated itself to meet and overwhelm the new competition.

Television will be as much competition to the films as radio was in its metamorphosis from crystal-set days.

**N**OW EXACTLY what has the film industry up its invisible sleeve? Just a few things that will further and assure its prosperity. To wit:

First, moviegoers of the future can look forward to



all pictures being made and screened in color. Today only a limited amount can be turned out because the manufacturers of the several color processes have been handicapped by material shortages to meet the ever increasing demand. Then, too, there will be additional tones to give reality instead of garishness to all scenes. Instead of the present-day three-tone process you can expect four and five tones: honest reproductions without glare or smear, which has been the case up to now. So this will mean the elimination of black and white films, a move that has been in the making for more than five years now.

Next will be Third Dimension. This is a process which gives depth to the film, so that when you look at a picture made with this device and projected with special apparatus you will think you are actually watching the action from the stage of the theatre instead of on a screen. Unfortunately the process never got farther than the experimental stage before a halt was called. If not for the war years the industry most certainly could have expected Third Dimension by now.

As matters stand the engineers are now trying to make up for lost time. They are promising movie executives concrete results within the next few years, probably by the time television reaches manhood, if not before. Then equipment will be manufactured in sufficient quantity to make possible installation in all types of theatres, within the means of the small exhibitor as well as the big fellow.

The third new gimmick is Magnascope. Now here's a device that, with the press of a button, enlarges the screen and images on it to the full width of the stage. The Roxy Theatre in New York experimented with it just prior to the war and I remember seeing it work during the showing of a newsreel. I also saw it work again for a few minutes during a feature and the effect it had on me indeed was a favorable one. Emergency war measures prevented progress but now the engineers are at it again and you can look forward to this implementing Third Dimension to give you that stage presentation effect.

High Fidelity is another improvement you can look forward to as sure as tomorrow. High Fidelity means the perfection of tonal quality. Walt Disney gave it a try with his cartoon feature *Fantasia*. Some may have been fortunate to have seen the picture as it was originally recorded with H.F. But the fact remains that Disney, at great expense, had special H.F. reproducing machines installed in a number of cities where the picture was being accorded special presentation.

The experiment was short-lived because of the prohibitive cost of reproducers to the ordinary exhibitor. No other producer or company has tried it since al-

though admitting it will become as necessary to production and exhibition as the film itself. As soon as engineers can develop the projector at moderate cost it will be installed in theatres, the same changeover being experienced as when sound first became an inevitable must for the future welfare of the industry.

**N**EW THEATRES are being built every day offering new designs and features. The movie theatres of the future will be little short of recreation centers, with all kinds of activities, cultural, social and sport, to be offering during wait periods. These centers will be built in cellars or below the theatre areas.

Prefabricated theatres will pop up virtually overnight in new communities and those districts that have been without movies until now for one reason or another. There will be more Drive-Ins cropping up so you don't even have to leave your car while looking at a movie. Expect to see also more of the mobile unit, sometimes called "jackrabbit shows." These mobile units have a projection machine operated from the juice of a motor truck and screens are put up in jig-time. The Army used this method of visual performance for educating soldiers as well as entertaining them extensively during the war in foreign countries as well as camps in the United States.

All in all, the film industry is looking ahead to meet squarely any emergency or competition, be it television or some other form of entertainment that may come along.

One thing you can depend on the movies for is finer and better made pictures. True there have been any number of bad ones but no part of the entertainment world is perfect. The film industry's average so far has been pretty good, you must admit. It has tried to do a good job, like any other industry and it has succeeded to some extent.

There is one final thought, a very important one that cannot be overlooked. And that is miss a great picture in your neighborhood, city or state and you still have the opportunity of catching it some other place, be it in your neighborhood, city, state or country. You can't say that for radio, television, stage plays or other forms of visual entertainment.

As for television in particular, the motion picture industry has been called upon to supply films for broadcasts in the past and will continue to furnish them in the future, as well as its stars, directors, writers and producers. It is a gesture quite natural in the scheme of things and proves that the allied arts are constructive in developing one of its component parts instead of fearing it.

# Principles & Policies:

## Election Statements From SWG Candidates

The Screen Writer offered to all candidates for office in the forthcoming November 19 SWG election space for a condensed statement of the principles and policies on which they base their candidacy. Following are the replies:

SHERIDAN GIBNEY

*Candidate for SWG Presidency*

The current lack of unity in the Guild in my opinion is not so much the result of political differences (what democratic organization is without them?). It is the inevitable concomitant of distrust among factions of the membership. To allay fears and suspicions it is necessary to find a policy for the Guild upon which an honest agreement can be obtained.

The primary purpose of the Guild is to serve writers as writers. It is not a forum for political debate, acrimonious charges, and emotional catharsis. As individuals and citizens I am sure we can find other outlets for these impassioned activities, but as writers, if we have any sense of self-interest whatever, we can only injure ourselves by fighting against each other instead of for each other. I recognize that many issues confronting guilds and unions today cannot be solved to the satisfaction of everyone. I submit therefore that first consideration must be given to the preservation of the Guild itself. Unless we stop quarreling for awhile and agree upon this, we shall presently have no Guild to quarrel in at all.

Broadly speaking, the Guild has two distinct obligations:

(1) to enforce the contract we now have, protecting writers as employees, and seek to better it in future negotiations; (2) to protect and further the interests of writers who do not work under employment contracts and therefore, while paying dues and assessments to our organization, do not derive any material benefit under our Minimum Basic Agreement.

It is apparent to everyone, I think, that this double function of the Guild has been a major source of dispute among the membership. I believe the conflict can only be resolved by accepting both functions as the live business of writers in the motion picture industry.

In view of this inherent duality, I believe that neither group should seek its own advantage at the expense of the other, and that people elected to the

HUGO BUTLER

*Statement of Withdrawal as Candidate for SWG Presidency*

Mr. Taft and Mr. Hartley have already had minor successes in disrupting our Guild. The weapons and ammunition they have so thoughtfully provided for those who would like to destroy the Guild lie within easy reach. No doubt there will be further attempts to use them.

To withstand these attacks I believe that our Guild must be stronger than it has ever been.

I do not believe that we will gain this strength by dividing our ranks with the false issue of Communism.

I do not believe we will find the necessary strength by placing our reliance on the Taft-Hartley law and the reinstated National Labor Relations Board, both of which have been fashioned to destroy us.

In this time of decreased production and increased writer-unemployment our Guild must rely upon its own unity and strength to advance the economic interests of its members.

I believe that a crucial factor in unifying and strengthening the Guild might well be the *unanimous* election of our president.

*For this reason I am withdrawing as a candidate for the presidency of the Guild.*

I shall vote for Mr. Gibney in the belief that he

Hugo Butler remains on the nomination list as a candidate for the Executive Board, basing his candidacy on the beliefs and principles embodied in the above statement.

will serve as an impartial chairman and a true representative of the membership.

Board have a primary moral obligation not to the group that elected them, but to the membership as a whole.

For God's sake, let's grow up!



ANNE CHAPIN

*Candidate for Vice-President*

(Miss Chapin is in the East and her statement was not received in time for inclusion in this section.)

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FRANCES GOODRICH

*Candidate for Vice-President*

(Miss Goodrich is in New York and her statement was not received in time for inclusion in this section.)

---

F. HUGH HERBERT

*Candidate for Vice-President*

Recently I offered my resignation as secretary of the SWG because I firmly believe the so-called "1 per cent royalty" idea did not represent the majority will of the membership. It was then agreed that this sentiment should be tested by mail.

Now all indications are that the mail expression is repudiating the "royalty" proposal. There is ample reason to believe that this will confirm decisively my contention that the proposal, as previously approved, did not "in any sense reflect the considered opinion" of the Guild majority. I therefore offer my continued services.

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ARTHUR KOBER

*Candidate for Vice-President  
and Executive Board*

To keep our members firm and united (and, therefore, the Guild strong and dynamic), to maintain and to expand our economic gains, to work for that which dignifies the screenwriter and elevates his craft and his industry, to recognize the value of (and, therefore, be receptive to cooperating with) all potential allies, to employ fair and democratic means in handling all issues, and to abide by the majority opinion of the board and of the membership—these are the principles on which I stand for election.

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GEORGE SEATON

*Candidate for Vice-President*

I believe that:

1. The Taft-Hartley Bill is a most unfortunate piece of legislation and oppose it—however, if it is deemed necessary, to safeguard the future of the Guild, I will sign the non-Communist affiliation pledge.

2. We must achieve the licensing of original material and a participation in the profits of reissues.

3. Realistic plans to create more production and to aid the unemployed writer must be initiated immediately.

4. We should revive the Inter-talent council.

5. Any plan to better the writer's position in this industry must be evaluated on its own merits and not whether it agrees or disagrees with any political philosophy.

---

DWIGHT TAYLOR

*Candidate for Vice-President*

I believe that any writers' organization worthy of the name has a unique responsibility in the preservation of free speech. It is the life blood of the writer. The SWG, by its very nature, must be prepared to house every diversity of opinion. But when and if necessary the Taft-Hartley non-Communist affidavit, as now worded, should be signed by Guild officers.

I am in favor of any financial plan whereby the screen writer may increase his income in proportion to his worth. I would like to see the writer in Hollywood achieve the status and dignity accorded the playwright on Broadway.

---

STANLEY RUBIN

*Candidate for Secretary and  
Executive Board*

I'm for a guild that eschews political baiting . . . a guild which, instead, argues proposals solely on their value to a majority of its members.

I'm for a guild that walks like

a union . . . that has enough faith in its own strength to pursue without fear any measures—including better advertising credits, payment for reissues, and a percentage of the gross—which will mean raising the basic minimum of dignity, authority, and financial return for the bulk of screen writers.

---

ARTHUR SHEEKMAN

*Candidate for Secretary*

I believe that a united, militant Guild can do much to get screen writers a fairer share of the rewards and respect due them in the industry.

I do not believe that a Guild, dominated by any organized minority, can be united.

If elected, my personal politics (I am a Roosevelt liberal) will in no way affect my work as Secretary of the Guild. At least, not consciously.

My only previous office (also non-political) was vice president of the Gloria Stuart Fan Club.

---

LEO TOWNSEND

*Candidate for Treasurer and  
Executive Board*

I am for a strong, progressive Guild which will fight for rights commensurate with our importance in the industry.

I am against turning our Guild into a country club, without a country.

I am for closer cooperation with other guilds and unions in the industry, and I am for the principle of a basic minimum royalty.

I am against the red-baiting which has clogged the machinery of our Executive Board during its past term.

I am for—and hope to be a part of—a Board which will act in concert to achieve a robust and united Guild.

---

HARRY TUGEND

*Candidate for Treasurer*

I am for two chickens in every pot except on Thursdays but am against the ill-timed mischievously-conceived

one-percent pipe dream. I am for the Ten Commandments, Four Freedoms, One World; and against the Taft-Hartley anti-labor bill. I believe the crucial problems facing our Guild can best be solved with honesty and realism rather than reckless fanaticism. I am a middle-of-the-road Liberal, which makes me a conspicuous target for wild-eyed Left- and Right-bound traffic.

---

**ROBERT ARDREY**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

The strength of the SWG rests on unity of interest and purpose among its membership. I favor the leasing program; immediate action to relieve the hardships of temporary unemployment; closer ties with other talent guilds; any action which enhances the prestige of screen-writing. But I oppose any program which subordinates the interests of our profession to the purposes of a political group, or in any way sets writer against writer and divides our interests. The Guild must find its strength in unity. The election of Sheridan Gibney and the All-Guild slate will, in my opinion, assure this end.

---

**ART ARTHUR**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

As I see it, the "All-Guild" slate consists of individuals who are banded together temporarily because other individuals have banded together permanently—particularly by unit voting—to perpetuate a form of clique control within the Guild. With an "All-Guild" Board elected, this banding together will cease as a habit of operation, and lively individual points of view will once again be heard in Executive Board meetings. As a Board member, I have seen this clique control—a form of intellectual lock-step—demonstrated again and again. So has James Cain. For further details, read Emmet Lavery's superb article *Sitting Out the Waltz*.

**STEPHEN MOREHOUSE  
AVERY**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I seek through our Guild the protection and furtherance of every possible artistic and economic advantage we have truly earned. I believe our natural allies to be the other artist-craftsmen groups of similar purpose and character, both here and elsewhere. I do not think our Guild can survive if it continues to be misused as a forum for thinly masked political opinion or as a tool, however feeble, for crude and ridiculous ideological manoeuvre. Let us remember our real purpose. Let us bargain well. Let us do the job for screenwriters we set out to do, and that alone.

---

**CLAUDE BINYON**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

For the second time a serious cleavage has developed within the Guild, threatening to destroy it. First there was the revolt of the so-called far right element, resulting in the Screen Playwrights incident. I helped the Guild survive that revolt. Now there are the unrest and dissension caused by the almost incomprehensible schemings of the so-called far left.

I propose to assist in a return to sound economic goals, and to professional sanity in achieving our aims. Otherwise what is left of our unity will be a dead duck.

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**HUGO BUTLER**

*Candidate for Executive Board*  
(See statement on page 19)

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**FRANK CAVETT**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I shall support Sheridan Gibney for President. I stand for a strong licensing program; for full consideration of both a fellowship program and direct emergency financial aid for eligible members; for the immediate establishment and functioning of our

bargaining committee; for referring the so-called 1% plan to that committee; for full membership in the Authors' League; for the closest possible cooperation with other talent groups; and, finally, for better over-all service to our membership through the elimination of the disruptive ideological bickering that tends to divide us.

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**ANNE CHAPIN**

*Candidate for Executive Board*  
(See page 20)

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**LESTER COLE**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I accepted the nomination for election to the Executive Board because I believe my fifteen years of active membership in the Guild, serving in good conscience as Board Member, Treasurer, Vice President and President particularly qualifies me again to serve this year.

If elected, it will be despite the efforts of the J. Parnell Thomas un-American committee, which has subpoenaed me, the adherents to the Taft-Hartley Act, and the Hollywood Motion Picture Alliance, members of which organization are also active members of the Screen Writers' Guild.

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**JOHN COLLIER**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I believe that no writer can function unless he is free to think and speak as he pleases, and unless he participates in the presentation of his work, and in its economic rewards.

Therefore, I am against the Thomas Committee and the Taft-Hartley Act. I am for percentages and a high minimum wage as envisaged in our economic program. I am for immediate action on reissues, and the linking of this subject to the urgent matter of unemployment.

I believe that nothing is beyond the reach of a united Guild, or within the reach of a divided one.



**OLIVE COOPER**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

If I am elected to the Executive Board, I intend to devote myself to the best professional and economic interests of screen writers—and only that.

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**VALENTINE DAVIES**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I believe the Guild should:

1. Push a licensing program like AAA.
2. Unite with other Guilds to secure a share of reissue profits.
3. Work out a practical loan fund program.
4. Find and use every realistic means to increase writer employment.

I believe the Guild should not:

1. Publicize and project visionary programs like 1% of the gross.
2. Regard itself as a labor union rather than a talent guild.
3. Concern itself with anything but writers' problems.

I am prepared to sign the Taft-Hartley affidavit, not because I approve of the principle or the law involved, but because I believe the security of the Guild makes it necessary to do so.

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**I. A. L. DIAMOND**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I believe that the unity of the Guild is more important than the election of any single individual. Whatever the composition of the Board, the Guild's economic program should be one which can enjoy the support of a substantial majority of the membership. Only by a show of internal strength can we gain our objective, and withstand the attacks to which we are subject under the Taft-Hartley law.

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**RICHARD ENGLISH**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I am strongly in favor of the AAA

and the loan-project fund. I want a Guild that can cope with studio management without the handicap of being termed a political tool of any group or any party. I am categorically opposed to the '1% of the gross' plan as a blue-sky dream that is neither sound nor workable. If elected I shall comply with the Taft-Hartley requirements as long as it is the law of the land. I believe in a strong Guild for the benefit of all writers; a Guild whose strength is in unity.

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**EVERETT FREEMAN**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

The Screen Writers' Guild has steadily been losing in prestige, dignity, and the respect that is the due of so important an organization. This is attributable, in large measure, to ill-advised direction and ill-conceived planning.

With a new producers contract in the offing, it is most important that we create for the year ahead an Executive Board of moderate, clear-thinking men and women whose sole concern will be for the betterment of screen writers and screen writing and who, by virtue of the respect and confidence of the industry and allied creative guilds, will be aided in achieving many of the goals we have set our hearts on.

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**PAUL GANGELIN**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

Our biggest problem is prompt action on writer unemployment. We'll need a comprehensive program that could include shrewd efforts to stimulate additional production; revival of confidence in our Guild by other talent guilds to strengthen joint action; a revolving loan fund with a Guggenheim - type sponsored - work twist; a Services Committee to scan possibilities of interim "allied employment" (as in documentary work); and any other sound ideas, some already suggested, that merit speedy exploration.

**FRANCES GOODRICH**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

(See page 20)

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**MORTON GRANT**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

My primary concern is for a strong united guild. I am in favor of the AAA and the SWG economic program. In my opinion the Taft-Hartley Act is designed to prevent a guild such as ours from obtaining economic advantages for our members. I do not think the NLRB functioning under this act can today be of any aid to us in a dispute with the producers or in a contest with a rival guild.

On the question of signing the affidavits, I endorse the position taken by the board in their resolution.

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**MARGARET GRUEN**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

With solidarity we can preserve our Guild, increase its economic strength and maintain our bargaining power. I believe unqualifiedly in freedom of conscience for the individual writer, in upholding our constitution and above all in a determined unity.

I am opposed to mail referendum on important issues which deserve the fullest discussion on the floor. By maintaining an unbreakable united front against those who wish to see this guild split and ineffectual we can render even the Taft-Hartley law relatively harmless.

These are my principles.

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**ALBERT HACKETT**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

(Mr. Hackett is in New York and his statement was not received in time for inclusion in this section.)

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**DOROTHY BENNETT**

**HANNAH**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

As a board member my special interest would lie in fostering every practicable plan to improve the posi-

tion of all writers in the motion picture industry, with the ultimate aim of our achieving the respect, authority, and equitable system of payment now accorded the playwrights (original AND adaptive) on Broadway.

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**GORDON KAHN**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

When the membership denounced the Taft-Hartley Bill before and after its passage, it did not mean surrender in the face of its first assault or suicide by compliance before it is needed—if ever.

When the membership approved the principal aims of a basic minimum royalty as its economic program, it meant a greater share of what writers have *earned* for the industry by their work; not handouts or loans with or without interest.

In this crisis I stand for a strong and unified Guild with that strength and unity coming from the membership and an executive board pledged to carry out its mandate.

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**ARTHUR KOBER**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

(See statement on page 20)

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**MILTON KRIMS**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

It is necessary at the outset for me to affirm I do not believe the Screen Writers' Guild is a political organization. It exists for one purpose, to obtain and maintain the best possible working conditions for its members. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that those elected to office will concentrate all their energies toward solution of exclusively Guild problems. It seems to me the two most pressing problems now are unemployment and the pending negotiations for a new contract. Licensing of original material is a primary objective. Matters now in committee should be pressed for action rather than permitted to

languish indefinitely. Above all I plead for unity and undeviating democracy within the Guild.

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**ERNEST PASCAL**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

The principle on which I stand for election to the Executive Board of the Screen Writers' Guild can be summed up in the simple assertion that I believe in and pledge myself to strive for the economic and cultural advancement of all screen writers (the fundamental principle upon which the Screen Writers' Guild was originally founded) and to refrain from using the Guild to fight for or against political issues that have no direct relation to writers' problems.

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**JOHN PAXTON**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

We appear to be entering a period similar to the period in which the Guild was fought for and established. With the same general atmosphere, the same pressures. Our main concern must be the Guild itself. And its objective—to increase the dignity and security of its writers. Any way of doing that must get careful, unbiased study.

Unity is essential and possible.

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**ROBERT PIROSH**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I was a Guild member when the Screen Playwrights tried to upset the apple cart. There is little doubt that their motive was to retrieve the apples and present them, nicely polished, to the producers. I suspect similar motives today in the threat to break up the Guild over the "Minimum Guild Royalty Proposal." This plan was approved by a membership vote, and that's good enough for me.

But more important than this or any other issue (even including the highly desirable AAA) is the preservation of the Guild as a strong and democratic trade union, ruled by majority vote.

**LOUISE ROUSSEAU**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I'm tired of all the shilly-shally alibis about the necessity for making the Guild stronger before advancing economic aims. We were able to organize in the first place because we were strong. Just last year, we achieved a fifty percent increase in the minimums because we were stronger.

Now I think it's high time some of the minimum-salaried writers got in there and pitched for their own economic betterment.

In a nutshell, we, of the low-bracket group, want more money and some sort of financial stability. We want the holes in the Minimum Basic Agreement plugged.

I think these objectives can be achieved by an executive board that will determinedly carry out the demands of the membership.

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**STANLEY RUBIN**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

(See statement on page 20)

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**LEONARD SPIGELGASS**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

I believe that the Screen Writers' Guild must concern itself solely with the problems of writers—their talents, their skills, their working conditions, their economics, and their welfare. I believe that the Screen Writers' Guild must vigilantly protect its members from any encroachments, plots, politics, schemes, or fantasies that will interfere with their professional integrity or their possibility of financial security. I have thus joined with candidates who believe similarly. We act jointly in this election in order that it may be possible to act individually on the board.

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**LEO TOWNSEND**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

(See statement on page 20)



**BRENDA WEISBERG**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

In the brief space allotted me I shall answer the question most frequently put to me: If elected will I file a non-Communist affidavit with the National Labor Relations Board?

I am opposed in principle to this and other sections of the Taft-Hartley law. However, until such time as the act is repealed or this section declared unconstitutional, or at any time that the affidavits should become neces-

sary to insure the safety of our Guild, or if a majority of the membership should demand it, or if counsel should advise it, I am prepared and willing to file such an affidavit.

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**CHARLES BRACKETT**

*Candidate for Executive Board*

(*At the moment of going to press, Charles Brackett replaced Brenda Weisberg on the SWG list of nominees. Following is his statement*):

My platform for the Screen Writers' Guild has one plank: The dignity of the screen writer, its preservation and its increase. As a means to this end: 1) a revolving fund which through loans can enable writers unemployed by the studios to work with some freedom from economic pressure; 2) a revived and strengthened inter-talent council which will have real power; 3) restriction of Guild activity to the craft problems of its members.

## If You Vote By Mail —

SWG members who have sent in their ballots by mail, or plan to do so, are reminded that the ballot cannot be validated unless the member's name is given by way of identification on the outside envelope. This envelope is removed and destroyed, leaving the ballot sealed within the inner unidentified envelope, and consequently perfectly secret, but the identification must appear on the outer ballot in order that the name of the member voting may be checked off the rolls.

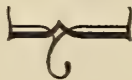
If you have sent in a mail ballot without identification, get in touch with the SWG office immediately, so that an attempt may be made to locate your ballot and make it count.

**IMPORTANT:** IN ORDER TO VOTE IN THE NOVEMBER SWG ELECTION, DUES MUST BE PAID UP TO JULY 1, 1947.

## Notice of Election Meetings

Special Meeting on SWG election issues and candidates: Thursday evening, November 6, at Masonic Temple.

General annual membership meeting for balloting and counting of ballots: Wednesday evening, November 19, at Hollywood-Roosevelt Hotel.





## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT: EMMET LAVERY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, MARY McCALL, JR.; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, HUGO BUTLER; SECRETARY, F. HUGH HERBERT; TREASURER, VALENTINE DAVIES. EXECUTIVE BOARD: HUGO BUTLER, JAMES M. CAIN, LESTER COLE, VALENTINE DAVIES, PHILIP DUNNE, F. HUGH HERBERT, DAVID HERTZ, TALBOT JENNINGS, GORDON KAHN, RING LARDNER, JR., EMMET LAVERY, MARY McCALL, JR., MAURICE RAPF, GEORGE SEATON, LEO TOWNSEND. ALTERNATES: RICHARD COLLINS, ART ARTHUR, MORTON GRANT, EVERETT FREEMAN, JOHN LARKIN, FRANK CAVETT.

## E D I T O R I A L

**A**S another year of Guild activity comes to a close, we look ahead to what may well be the most critical period in our history.

The specter of unemployment has given way to the fact; reissues have replaced a great percentage of production in the studios; Mr. Taft and Mr. Hartley are camped on our doorstep, hoping to be asked in; and in Washington our Guild is being belabored by a certain well publicized Congressional Committee.

And, in the face of these Guild-weakening influences, we approach in the coming year a task which calls for every ounce of force we can muster. Our present agreement with the producers ends in May, 1949. A good deal of our time between now and then must be spent in negotiations for a new contract. And of course we want that contract to contain a number of advantages not found in the present document.

Obviously a weak Guild can expect no better than a watered-down, hand-out kind of contract which will satisfy no one but the producers. They may contend—and they may be right—that a weak Guild deserves no better.

It follows, then, that only by a show of real and genuine strength can we hope to obtain the kind of contract we want. Only through strength can we attack our economic problems and overcome the dangers implicit in the Taft-Hartley Law. And we can attain this strength only through unity, for a united Guild is always a strong one.

And unity must become more than a high-sounding word, to be dragged out at meetings and held up for the admiration of one and all, then put back



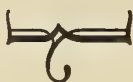
into its plush-lined container and filed away on a dusty shelf along with all the other pious words and muscular phrases.

Unity must be put into practice, and immediately. No one can deny that during the past year we have allowed ourselves the luxury of a lot of name calling. We have filled the air—and sometimes the mails—with charges and counter charges.

We are now on the threshold of a new Guild year. We are about to elect new officers and a new Executive Board. We can attain the unity we want by electing a strong, forward-looking Board and making sure that it carries out the will of the majority which elected it.

A candidate's personal politics should be of no significance to us. Our primary concern must be his Guild politics. If we believe that the issues he supports will strengthen the Guild, we should vote for him; if we believe they will weaken the Guild, we should not.

And let us elect and stand by the strongest "pro-Guild" Board our votes can put into office. Only through such action can we hope for the strength which will make our Guild a powerful bargaining unit and a militant, cohesive writers' organization of which every member can be justly proud.



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(October 22, 1947)

Columbia—Louella MacFarlane; alternate, Edward Huebsch

MGM—Gladys Lehman; alternate, Anne Chapin; Sidney Boehm, Margaret Fitts, Charles Kaufman.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox—Wanda Tuchok; alternate Richard Murphy.

Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks.

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International—Silvia Richards.

RKO—Geoffrey Homes.

# International Report

HENRY MYERS

SATURDAY, September 29th, the Liaison Committee met with representatives of the *Syndicate des Scénaristes* of France and of the Screenwriters' Association of Great Britain, for the formal signing of the mutual agreement, which our organizations had already ratified, and also to begin exploring various questions in which screen writers are interested.

In the opinion of your committee, the meeting will prove to have been of incalculable importance to all of us. The principles that emerged, after carefully prepared presentation by Louis Chavance, general Secretary of the *Scénaristes*, obtained a unanimous acceptance because they seem to go a long way toward solving problems that have confounded us, and which we ourselves have been seeking to solve. We request that you bring these principles before our membership for a vote, as soon as possible, not only because we are eager to see them put into practice, but because we believe they will help to give the SWG a renewed drive toward unity.

The meeting was opened with a welcoming speech by M. Roger Ferdinand, president of the *Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques*, the parent body of which the *Syndicat des Scénaristes* is a part. (There was one little touch on which I must comment: a marble bust of Beaumarchais, who founded the *Société* about 150 years ago, looked down

from the mantel at us over M. Ferdinand's head. This was not staged; it is an example of the habitual consciousness of their history, which they possess to a much greater degree than we do. Then M. Henri Jeanson, president of the *Scénaristes*, took the chair, and the Agenda was announced. It was as follows

1. The question of Authors' Rights, and the question of Royalties.
2. International Defense of Screen Writers. (That is, how to protect one another's rights by joint action.)
3. The question of Writers' prestige.
4. Reciprocal Information, and the signing of the Agreement.

As a first step toward acting on these items, it was felt necessary that we get some knowledge of one another's organizations, how they work, their character and composition, their problems, etc. I was called upon first to describe the Screen Writers' Guild, which I did as adequately as twenty minutes would permit. I sketched our history, some of our grievances, some of our difficulties and some of our achievements. It made a good impression and evoked recognition of their own Guild's coloration, in the French and British.

## English Situation

Miss Marjorie Deans of the English delegation presented an account of the Screenwriters' Association of Great Britain. They resemble us in many ways, but they have a problem of their own which we have not so far encountered. That is their relation to the organization called "A.C.T.", whose membership includes technicians, camera men, sound, etc., and some directors. The Screenwriters Association includes in its membership—in addition to writers—a number of

producers who are, or have been writers; so many, in fact, that when the producers have a meeting of their own, it is dominated by writers.

It is not certain whether or not this unusual composition of the Screenwriters is the reason, but in any case they have not been able to cooperate with A.C.T. The latter insists that the Screenwriters become a part of A.C.T. before they will take any kind of joint action with them. The Screenwriters are willing to take joint action but insist on remaining a completely independent organization. The Screenwriters maintain that they have special interests which are so different from that of other organizations that they cannot risk being out-voted in such a set-up as the A.C.T. proposes, although they have no objection to being a trade union. So far it has been a deadlock, but they are still trying to find a method of joining forces.

The characteristics of the *Scénaristes* emerged as the main Agenda was entered into, since they had predicated everything upon their own organizational powers plus cooperation with the English and us.

After sketching a history of the *Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques*, M. Chavance defined "authors' rights" as their experience has demonstrated them to be. They consider that there are *two* rights for which they bargain with producers:

*First*, there is the right to *present*. (on screen or stage or air.)

*Second*, there is the right to *re-produce*. (that is, to make into a play, picture, etc.)

The French writers *own* both these rights. Specifically, the *Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs* owns the entire repertoire of the French theatre,

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HENRY MYERS, EDWARD ELISCU and ALBERT E. LEWIN, now working in Paris, form the SWG Liaison Committee representing the Screen Writers' Guild in their contacts with the French and British screen writers' organizations. They present here a report, written by Mr. Myers, of an important international meeting of writers.



and the *Société des Auteurs* owns all the books. These two organizations, in cooperation with the *Scénaristes*, can stop all film production, any time they wish. Remember: they never *sell*; they only *lease*. In France there is actually a law that after seven years, a literary property must revert to its author; in Italy it is three years.

**P**POINT I concerned royalties and writers' rights.

Now, since they have finally reached the organizational stage of strength whereby they *do* all work together, the French writers have begun considering how they can be adequately paid, and when they have decided what they are entitled to, I don't see, offhand, what will prevent their getting it. So far, their thinking has taken the following direction:

After examining various ways that money is made by writers, they have determined that the biggest return comes via royalties. Therefore, they mean to abandon both the notion of Flat Deal and of Weekly Salary (they never *have worked* for salary, but only on flat deals); they will lease their works *only* on a royalty basis. They want a percentage (I don't know how large) on each and every showing of each and every picture.

As it now stands, the producer gets both of the rights mentioned above: the right to make the picture, and the right to show it.

The right to make it, the French writers are willing to grant, but the right to show it will have to be paid for adequately, and "adequately" means, by royalties.

### Returns Via Royalties

Unexpectedly, the French producers are willing, but the French writers are moving cautiously. The point is, the producers prefer paying royalties to paying cash, and the writers mistrust the bookkeeping. They are going to insist on a particular *method*, by which the royalties are to be collected. They want it collected for them by the organization called SACCEM.

The latter collects money right now, *at the box-office*, on behalf of Composers, Authors and Editors, and the *Scénaristes* want to arrange with SACCEM to collect royalties as they now collect that other money. (It will interest our membership to know that the Hollywood Studios receive money collected by SACCEM because our

individual contracts always state that the Studio is the Author of what we write.) The *Scénaristes*, then, will not collect from the Producers directly, on the basis of the latter's computations, but from the *Distributors*, via SACCEM.

For the right to make the picture, they will accept the symbolical sum of one franc. For the right to show it, there will be the collection of royalties just described, and they will be distributed according to an agreement among writers. There is no complete agreement yet, because some directors claim part of authorship, but that is being ironed out and will not stop operations. The technicians are ready to help the writers accomplish what they are after, not only because they have learned the wisdom of supporting each other's economic rights, but because every one feels that a royalty arrangement will improve the quality of pictures, and believe it or not, the aesthetic consideration is very important here. And very soon, the *Société* is going to vote to withhold all works unless producers sign an agreement jointly with them and the adapters (or "screen-play writers") that royalties will be paid.

### Royalty Principle

They ended their presentation of the question of royalties by asking the Americans and English to join them in voting for it, *in principle*, on a world-wide scale, and *then* take care of the special conditions found in each separate country.

These differences, of course, exist and must be taken into account. For example, we pointed out to them that because of habit, insecurity, and what-not, many of our Hollywood writers may prefer the ostensible safety of the salary system or of the flat deal, even though it could be demonstrated that royalties would pay better in the long run. To this, the English delegation made a clever suggestion: that if and when the royalty system is instituted, we should then retroactively consider our present salaries and flat deals as advances against royalties. Also we felt that there will be a fear that pictures may not be shot at all, and then where are the royalties? To this the French already have a solution, which is in operation now. Each time a producer buys a product, he deposits a sum of money with SACCEM; if he shoots the picture

within a certain time, he gets the money back. That has cut down a lot of the uncertainty.

But the international, general aspect must be established, because problems of an international nature will confront us; such as: the different taxes in different countries; the transmission of money from country to country; the need to make sure that royalties will be paid in all countries, not just one, or it will be insufficient. All these things will clearly require international agreement. That is why a vote on the *principle*, that we favor payment by royalties on a world-wide scale, must first be obtained.

Before passing to the next point, here are a couple of interesting items of general discussion that we noted:

1: French producers can hire any number of successive writers on a script, but only if the incumbent writer agrees. If it is thought that his consent is withheld unreasonably, an appeal may be made to the *Scénaristes*, whose decision is final.

2: There is a basic difference between Hollywood and French production. In Hollywood, the big companies buy everything that strikes their fancy, thinking *maybe* they will use something; in France, a producer provides *definitely*, for a specific picture which he really means to shoot, somewhat like our Independents.

**P**POINT II was "International Defense of Writers' Rights".

*On Re-Makes*: They want information exchanged between the three countries, on whether the original credits are mentioned. The French have legal methods of stopping a picture from being shown if the credits have been left off. They want this exchange of information to apply not only to what appears on the screen, but also to the various kinds of advertising.

They also want to exchange opinions on the number of names that may appear on the main title, leading to an agreement between our three Guilds which will make it standard all over the world. They favor a maximum of three names, even on re-issues, although they intend that all the writers who contributed shall share in the money obtained. The British limit the names to two, but it can be raised to three by agreement.



Their agreement with the producers stipulates that writers' names appear everywhere that the directors' do, in the same size and place. They also have a *separate* card for the writing-titles, and consider it one of their most important achievements for writers' prestige. Both British and French feel that too many names have helped discredit American films. They believe that the Producer should be required to make up his own mind as to who is the correct writer for a job, instead of the present interminable replacing of writers, which they consider degrading. Nor do they believe that it will mean less work for writers as a whole; in the long run, it takes the same length of time to write a play right as to write it wrong. (And here is another problem that can be solved by payment in royalties.)

*Registration for protection against plagiarism:* Each of them has the same provision that we do for the filing of scripts. It is now proposed that scripts be filed in *triplicate*, so that they can be sent immediately to the other two countries and filed and protected there too. This should be done with legal aid and advice and a fee arranged by mutual agreement.

*Standardization of Terminology:* There is the need for accurate mutually agreed upon vocabulary of film terms, such as "Adaptation", "Synopsis", "Continuity" and the like, and also of the writers' titles when they function in these various capacities. On this too, they ask exchange of opinion.

*Method of settling disputes:* They liked our methods of using committees to settle credit disputes and grievances, and for conciliation, and wish to set up international machinery similar to it. What they are seeking is a method of settling disputes which will not take so long that the issue is not decided until the picture is no longer worth anything. Whatever is arrived at, will of course increase its strength and authority if it is standardized for all countries.

While we are asking our members to vote for the principle of "International Defense of Writers' Rights", they want it to lead to an agreement which will implement the principle. For one thing, they intend to carry on a campaign to help their American friends get paid for re-issues.

## POINT III on the Agenda: Prestige.

The French are aiming their efforts at securing greater prestige for *writers* and *only for writers*. In England there are director-writers, but the French are not interested in wasting their blows on a mixed objective; they urge us to be specific and unadulterated. They urge us to join them in this campaign, and in this concept. It is not to be aimed *against* any one, but it is the writer whom they and we want to see get more money and more fame. We urge the SWG to join the *Scénaristes* in this joint campaign.

Our delegate, Edward Eliscu, made a proposal which was enthusiastically approved. He suggested that the best *written* pictures in each of the three countries, which have been so voted by *writers*, be shown in each others' cities, and also that the scripts be interchanged. To which the English delegation added the amendment that, once a year, we similarly interchange the best *unshot* scripts, for publication in book form. We urge the SWG to ratify this also.

★

Last, and outwardly the most effective, was the formal signing of the agreement, by which we temporarily become members of one another's organization when working in the respective country. Henri Jeanson signed for the *Scénaristes*, Guy Morgan for the Association, and I for the SWG. The room was full of reporters and flashlights, and by this time you probably have received some sort of account of the proceedings, more or less accurate. I will send you our two copies—one in English, one in French—if I can be sure they will arrive undamaged, because the *Scénaristes* went to a great deal of trouble getting them attractively bound, and they will be among our archives. Possibly I will bring them myself if it looks safer; I will be back in about three months.

That is, I think, a fair resume of what went on throughout the day, except to add that our French hosts entertained us with their traditional lavishness, not only as to food and wine, but in cordiality. The English, too, pressed us with invitations to visit them, and expressed regret that our recent trip to London was too brief for a meeting there. Guy Morgan

invited us to visit their club-house, which seems to be an intellectual centre, in which writers and newspaper-critics meet on friendly terms. Really, there is a very warm feeling toward us, on both their parts, in addition to a common-sense attitude about working together for mutual advantages. We hope you will expedite what they ask.

Your Liaison Committee takes pleasure in signing itself,

HENRY MYERS,  
EDWARD ELISCU,  
ALBERT E. LEWIN,

Members of the Screen Writers'  
Guild and of  
*Le Syndicat des Scénaristes.*

★ ★ ★

## SUMMARY OF REQUESTED ACTION BY SWG

1. *Vote that we favor in principle, payment by royalties, on a world-wide scale, with details to be worked out later.*

2. *Vote that we exchange information regarding credits or re-makes.*

3. *Vote that we exchange opinions on the number of writers' names to appear on a picture, with a view to standardizing it internationally.*

4. *Vote for triplicate registration of scripts, for simultaneous protection in all three countries.*

5. *Vote for standardization of film vocabulary.*

6. *Vote to join international campaign for writers' prestige.*

7. *Vote to join the Syndicat des Scénaristes and the Screenwriters' Association in "International Defense of Screen Writers' Rights."*

8. *Vote to show best-written films of the year—so voted by writers—produced in France and England, and help them to show ours.*

9. *Vote to exchange the best-written un-shot scripts of the year—so voted by writers—for publication in book form in all three countries.*

★ ★ ★

The following letter, written by Marjorie Deans of the British Screenwriters' Association to SWG member Stephen Morehouse Avery, is printed here by permission of Mr. Avery as a sidelight from the English point



*of view on the international screen writers' meeting in Paris described in Henry Myers' report.*

My dear Stephen:

The Screenwriters' Congress was most interesting. You will probably read about it in the next issue of *The Screen Writer*. Messrs. Henry Myers and Eliscu and Albert Lewin were representing your Guild, and we were five, including our secretary, Guy Morgan.

I told the story of the trouble we are having with our Technicians Union, ACT, who want to absorb us, and whom we refuse to be absorbed into. Guy Morgan had told me he particularly wanted to make our position clear on this point to the other groups.

Both we and the Americans were

tremendously struck by the high standing and educated outlook of the French writers, who are a branch of the *Societe des Auteurs* and seemed in consequence to be on a very different level from ourselves. We were received in the most wonderful premises, like a small palace, in the Rue Ballu, Montmartre . . . altogether a most cultured and elegant atmosphere. The President, Henri Jeanson, is a fascinating personality, and Louis Chavance, the Secretary, is extremely energetic and intelligent.

One of the chief subjects of discussion was royalties for Screenwriters; but the jaws of the British and American delegates dropped visibly when Chavance explained to us that the French *Scénaristes* were trying to establish the principle of not being paid for their work at all until the film was *shown*, and then receiving

box office royalties. The meeting at once became extremely animated, while speaker after speaker on our side of the table wanted to know what would happen if the film was either never shown at all or never made . . . (something that seems to happen very rarely in France). I finally managed to suggest that the American and British system of salaries could continue as usual but be regarded as advance royalties. One could collect additional royalties if the film were an outstanding success. Most of us seemed satisfied with this idea.

But the great thing is that, if you come to Paris in the Spring, you will automatically be a member of the French *Syndicate des Scénaristes* and receive every kind of privilege and hospitality from them.

London,

October 5, 1947.

## H. L. DAVIS

The author of *HONEY IN THE HORN* (Pulitzer Prize and Harper Prize Novel) creates a new landmark in American fiction.

Hand-hewn from the legend and past of America, his second novel ranges from the Western prairies to the France of the Revolution and the Terror, linking the old world to the new in the name of the notorious and beautiful Thérèse de Fontenay.

*At all bookstores, \$3.00*



## *Harp of a Thousand Strings*

AND PUBLISHED BY MORROW

# Report and Comment

## Our Declining Foreign Market

SAMUEL GOLDWYN

*SAMUEL GOLDWYN wrote the following article as a contribution to The Screen Writer's special section in the October issue on the foreign market and British tax situation. Since the article was received too late for inclusion in the last issue, it is presented here.*

**N**O worker in any studio who is not in the inner councils of his company can possibly know how serious a threat the British tax and declining world revenues are to his job and to the organization for which he works.

My own judgment is that no matter what comes from the negotiations on the British tax, Hollywood faces a potential loss of up to 25% in the industry's gross revenues because of foreign freezes, taxes and outright refusal of many countries to play American pictures. In addition, domestic box office receipts are off from last year and just recently have fallen off 18% to 20%. When box office receipts drop noticeably, the exhibitors' almost instantaneous reaction is to cut the playing time of pictures, which means a still further reduction of revenue to producers.

Put all those factors together and reasonable business judgment will tell you that the studios are faced with a loss of revenue which may go as high as 50%. I have always been an optimist about this business, and I still am, but honest realism tells me that we just cannot whistle away those hard economic facts. Without sounding any note of panic, such a reduction in revenues can mean disaster unless

all of us take prompt steps to avert the dangers ahead.

The basic objective which we must aim for is to make the American market economically self supporting. That means we must produce much more efficiently, and will require the highest degree of cooperation here in Hollywood among every creative branch of the industry and every craft. Writers will have to turn in scripts that are carefully conceived and more tightly written than ever before. The writer should plan his script with an eye to costs without sacrificing the quality of his writing. Directors will not be able to take the time which they have in the past in putting those scripts onto the screen. Producers must plan much more carefully to get a maximum degree of efficiency out of each step of production. The crafts will have to pitch in whole-heartedly towards the goal of greater efficiency. And everyone will have to make these efforts without sacrificing quality. As a matter of fact, we must go further and improve the quality of our pictures in every respect.

It will be impossible to continue along the same lines that we were able to follow during the recent most prosperous era of the industry's history. Those days are definitely over but I have infinite faith in the people of our industry all up and down the line. This industry has met great challenges in the past and I am confident that we will be able to meet this one successfully.

## The Taft-Hartley Law and Porkchops

EDWARD HUEBSCH

**R**ECENTLY Messrs. Dunne and Cohen, a writer-lawyer team, ventured into the mazes of the Labor Management Relations Act of 1947. They "emerged with a few pertinent facts" which they recorded in their lively article, *Absolutely, Rep. Hartley—Positively, Sen. Taft*.

Encouraged by their daring, I too have ventured into the legal thicket. Emerging, I am convinced of the soundness of their main conclusion: "the Act provides no help for peace-

EDWARD HUEBSCH is SWG member and a contract writer at a major studio.

ful law-abiding unions in obtaining fair contracts through collective bargaining."

Or, to put it in the language of the trade, this law is about money. It is a law which gives our employers the chance to say, "No—a thousand times No" when we ask for more dough. It is a law which even makes it possible to chop away at the present inadequate standards.

If it were not for the annoying habit of employers refusing to pay more to their employees, there probably wouldn't be unions, including ours. In fact, the chief "relations" between labor and management occur over the weekly stipend. It should be no surprise to anybody that this Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947 comes down to the matter of porkchops. And with porkchops at their present prices, none of us can afford not to understand the law, and thoroughly.

Let's go back to 1935. At that time, Congress passed the Wagner National Labor Relations Act. It assured employees the right to organize and bargain; it outlawed company unions; it prevented the employer from firing or discriminating because of union activity. It was a valuable asset to the Screen Writers' Guild in gaining recognition and in achieving its first contract: read, more dough for screenwriters.

But, let us remember, big business decided to disregard the law until its constitutionality was tested. In the words of the counsel of the Weirton Steel Company, "When a lawyer tells a client that a law is unconstitutional, it is then a nullity and the client need no longer obey that law."

It was only after the controversy about "court-packing" and the recession of 1937 that the Supreme Court upheld the Wagner Act.

In the 1947 law, unions are subject to a host of restrictions which virtually nullify the previous act. Instead of an asset, we now have a liability. Instead of having the law help us get more money, we now have a law that exposes our pocketbooks to the other side of the bargaining table.

Shift the scene to our 1949 contract negotiating meeting. We come marching in. We say, "we represent the



screen writers and we want—" There is an interruption. Somebody has dropped a copy of the law on the table. "Do you really represent the screen writers?" We reply splendidly, "We—" A lawyer points to the Act, demurring, as lawyers will. "Hold on a bit. We must live with the law—and the law says—we may have an election first."

And it *does* say. It says that an election to determine the bargaining agent must be held if a petition for such election is filed "by an employer, alleging that one or more individuals or labor organizations have presented to him a claim to be recognized as the representative."

This is very cute. The employer merely "alleges." He doesn't have to bring in signed cards. He says he believes somebody has a claim. And, if he is in a tight corner, he probably can rake up a couple of odd relatives to make it look nicer.

The scene immediately shifts to 1951, or so. Because by the time the NLRB gets around to looking at the petition and holding the election, a couple of years have passed.

## Negotiating Table

But let's not leave our boys just standing around a negotiating table. Our boys are nobody's fools. They get around this election business. (Don't ask me how; I'll explain it when I get into screen play.) They are now pounding the table. Suppose they say, "We are a certified union. We have filed affidavits. We have taken the oath of purity, loyalty, and trial by producer and—"

You're right. Another interruption. Same law, though. Section 9, subsection (g). "No labor organization shall be eligible for certification . . . unless it can show that it and any national or international labor organization of which it is an affiliate or constituent union has complied with its obligation to file affidavits, reports . . ."

Perhaps that's in the maze too. It means simply that the SWG cannot become the certified union unless the Authors' League has similarly filed. It might also mean that the Dramatists' Guild and the Radio Writers' Guild must file. In short, at present,

*the SWG would have to withdraw from the Authors' League to secure certification.*

Quite a situation: decertified if you do, and decertified if you don't.

Still, it's the law of the land, and since we can't have a speakeasy on every corner handing out Wagner Act when you say Joe sent me—let's not fly off the handle.

WHAT about unfair labor practices? Under the Wagner Act, it used to be unfair for an employer to coerce or discriminate against Guild members. It still is, BUT, the employer is free to express his opinion. He can tell you that he thinks the guild is crazy to ask for more dough in hard times when he's making more than ever, and you can't have enough brains to write screen plays if you stay in that idiotic Guild. That's his opinion, you see, and he has the right to express it.

Not only is he entitled to this opinion, but he can file a petition to decertify your guild at any time. A company union has a right to a place on the election ballot. The NLRB can't rule out the company unions, as it did under the old act. (Section 9, subsection 2.)

Unfair labor practices used to be something the employers couldn't do. Now it's the other way around. There are a dozen things your guild cannot do. It couldn't for example, strike against a company for recognizing a company union—that's a jurisdictional dispute, and it's outlawed.

Several paragraphs back we left our boys stranded at the negotiating table just as they were being cuffed about the ears with a new weapon called the Law of the Land.

Somebody ought to give them a hand. My own travels among the mazes has convinced me that our Guild can survive: if we are determined to use our considerable strength; if we refuse to take the dead-end road through the NLRB's legal roadblocks; if we settle our disputes through impartial arbitrators and not the very partial NLRB; if we insist, as Weirton Steel did, but

with the Founding Fathers on our side, that this Law is unconstitutional; that it is a nullity and that we shall work with all other groups and organizations to bring about its immediate repeal.

## A Probably Irrelevant Suggestion

CYRIL HUME

MR. Syd Boehm was really supposed to write this article. When I told him the idea of it he said he liked it, and when I explained that writing in any form always made me nervous and tired he said all right, he would do it. Well he has not done it, and he has kept on not doing it. Maybe he has stopped liking the idea, or maybe writing has started making him tired too—I would guess that very few things make him nervous. Anyway, the article is now back in my lap, and this is the general idea of it:

Here we are, The Screen Writers' Guild, and we have dues, and meetings, and elections, and everything. At the meetings we spend a good part of the time making each other suffer for being Fascist beasts and Red termites and so on. And between rounds we try to dream up ways of making the producers suffer for being producers. Then the idealistic member at the rear of the hall gets up and brings out about the honor and glory of being a screen writer. And finally somebody moves, and somebody else seconds, and the ayes have it, and we adjourn *sine die*, and all go home, and the family has not waited up.

Now my idea is why not once in a while also do something about the *writing* part of being screen writers. Of course if there is anything against this in the by-laws, I at once withdraw the obnoxious proposal, and no need of any fines, or votes of censure, or Cold Looks from the platform. But I mean most of us are always only too happy to explain how smelly the movies are with a few exceptions, and most of the exceptions are pretty

CYRIL HUME is a SWG member and the author of many outstanding screen plays.



smelly, including the Russian. But conditions would all be very different if the writer ever had his way about it, and you could just once do a script without some well-meaning producer's tongue in your cheek. We would then not only create mature, high class entertainment, but sock them stiff at the box office.

Now I personally believe there is more than a grain of truth in these fine alcoholic assertions. But why don't we go way out on a limb, and *find out* if there is truth in them? I mean whether we are by natural depravity the awful bums the movies make us seem to be, or whether some of us do, as we all maintain, deserve to be screen writers in a better world of longer trousers.

**WHAT** I suggest for it is a couple of competitions with prizes to them. In Competition A, any member would be eligible to submit what he considers—in spite of hell and all the producers in it—a really fine and original modern screenplay. The one he carries around in his head, three-quarters written, and his wife is sick and tired of it. Once every year or six months a good hard-working board of judges would select the best of the lot submitted. This script would then become the joint property of the author and The Screen Writers' Guild, and would be peddled in the open market. And one of the stipulations would be that it would have to be produced within a given length of time, and exactly as written. And if it were not produced within the time named it could be re-purchased at the original price less depreciation by the author and The Screen Writers' Guild. And no changes could be made in it without the consent of the author and of The Screen Writers' Guild.

#### Producers' Opportunity

Perhaps at first the producers would shy off, suspecting Art, or anti-Capitalist propaganda, or just general conspiracy. But sooner or later I think some producer who had been having trouble with his wife or leading lady would get hysterical and bite. And if we screen writers are really as terribly gifted as we let on, the producer could not fail to make several million dollars before he had finished dictating his formal apologies to the Producers'

Association. Eventually, by a sort of financial chain-reaction, the seal of the Screen Writers' Guild on these scripts might come to have a prestige and market value comparable (for instance) to that of the Book-of-the-Month Club. Producers would sweat, and agonize, and knife each other, waiting for the winner to be announced. In the very long run they might learn something.

But what I like best about my own idea is that it would give young writers such a chance to break into the money. I assume that young writers would win most of the competitions because they usually have the best ideas, and the freshest talent, and, above all, the most time on their hands. (And here I must positively rule myself ineligible for appointment to the board of judges on the grounds of my known failure to be hard-working enough. Also I want to compete against some of those young writers who keep making passes at my job right while I am looking.)

Competition B is frankly so open to the suspicion of Artiness that probably a legal committee ought to make a study of the by-laws before it is adopted *viva voce*. Competition B would be more in the form of a project. It would constitute an official SWG effort to develop new screen-writing techniques, and to explore the possibilities of enlarging the present scope of the you-know-what — the movies. With a substantial cash prize to each winner. (What is the treasury for anyway—the United Brotherhood of Girdle Workers?)

#### The Winning Script

Specific projects might be something as follows: A script demonstrating practical methods for bringing any play by William Shakespeare before a modern screen audience. Or, W. H. Hudson's *Marta Riquelme*—and get some grandeur up there. Or, The Palomar Telescope—dramatized, not fictionalized. Or you call one.

The winning script, in mimeographed form, at 25 cents the copy, would be available to all members in the lobby directly after the meeting. Even a producer could obtain one by mailing in ten dollars and return postage.

See?

## Original Writing for The Screen

LOWELL E. REDELINGS

*Lowell E. Redelings, motion picture editor of the Hollywood Citizen-News, made the following comment in one of his recent columns on the contribution of screen writers to the film industry. His remarks are reprinted herewith by permission.*

**W**ILLIAM POWELL, in a radio talk says that whatever a big star is worth, you can bet that the writer is worth twice that much.

In short, a star is only as good as the story, and the role which he plays. If you aren't convinced, please consider the cases of two splendid actresses Greer Garson and Ida Lupino. Miss Garson was blessed with good stories and good roles, for a time; the wheel of fortune spun—and you have seen less of her on the screen in the past two years.

Ida Lupino showed the world what a perfectionist she is in the dramatic arts with an unforgettable performance in *The Hard Way*<sup>1</sup> some years ago. Since then, her luck has changed. Her roles have been mediocre; more often than not insipid. *Deep Valley*<sup>2</sup> offered her a chance to show once again her rare ability. The result: The year's best portrayal by an actress.

Yet the writers, as William Powell says, are worth twice what the stars are worth. But what writer on the average earns anywhere near the income of a star?

#### Encouragement Needed

It is high time that Hollywood executives pay less attention to the stars and more to the writers. From them, if properly encouraged (which means less front-office interference with artistic creation and more respect for the writers' craft) can come many a fine original story—and original screen play, too, of which there are too few.

So long as Hollywood depends almost entirely upon other sources for

<sup>1</sup>Screen play by Irwin Fuchs; contributor to screen play construction: Peter Viertel.

<sup>2</sup>Screen play by Salka Viertel and Stephen Morehouse Avery.



## THE SCREEN WRITER

its story material—the stage, novels, magazines, etc.—just so long will it continue to reflect in an artificial way, with the usual showmanship embellishments, the output of these sources good bad, and indifferent.

The motion picture medium is peculiar unto itself. No other source of material, the radio, the stage, or literature, can equal the screen in the manner of telling a story—the same as no printed word, or words, can equal a photograph in telling a story.

For that reason, the vast majority of screen stories should be written directly for the screen. Yet, in practice, the direct opposite is true. And why? Simply because the writer is held in

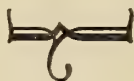
such light regard by the “front office.” The writer, on the other hand, is in no position to argue the merits of the system. He doesn’t like it, but he does like his weekly salary check, for which he certainly can’t be blamed.

### Change Needed

So the change in the system, if any change is to occur, must be made by those who will profit most from just such a change—the production executives. They might start encouraging the writers by offering substantial cash prizes for the best stories submitted by a given date—instead of the present practice of at least one big studio of conducting an annual contest for the best novel.

All this does is turn up half a dozen or less possibilities for film production simply because the novelists who take part in the contest aren’t writing directly for the screen. This practice makes about as much sense as if a publishing house would conduct a contest for the best original screen story, which then would be adapted into a novel.

William Powell put his finger directly on a “soft spot” by his statement on the air. The writer is certainly as important a creative artist as there is in motion pictures today. And the sooner Hollywood’s executives recognize this fact, the sooner will a better grade of films result—with resultant prosperity to all.



## Correspondence

### Letter From Venice

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)

the U. S. government had decided to be represented in Venice.

With the major studios out of the race, the organizers of the Festival could only deal with independent producers or by personal agreements with certain directors. Consequently, the choice of American pictures was done somewhat haphazardly. One got to see two pictures with Orson Welles (*Tomorrow Is Forever* and *The Stranger*), two pictures by Robert Siodmak (*Strange Affair Of Uncle Harry* and *Time Out Of Mind*); two pictures by Jean Renoir (*The Diary Of a Chambermaid* and *Woman On The Beach*), also for mysterious reasons *Leave Her To Heaven*, *Story of G. I. Joe*, *It Happened On Fifth Avenue*, and *Spellbound*. That last one was accompanied by a definite effort to win the European public to Mr. Selznick’s pictures and to publicize his releasing organization. But

the choice of these titles is hardly understandable when other American films such as *Grapes Of Wrath*, *Gone With The Wind*, *The Oxbow Incident*, *The Southerner*, any of Preston Sturges’ movies, are still generally unknown on the continent where everyone is anxious to see them. The ways of releasing organizations are mysterious and contribute to make the public feel more and more let down by the American production.

### Sybarites in Venice

Had the United States been more actively present at the Festival they might have turned to a very pleasant way of winning journalists to their production. The Mexicans used it: before showing any of their films they threw a wonderful party attended by Count Sforza, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. According to the *maitre d’hotel*, three million liras of food went down the throats of the guests in about half an hour. It was indeed a sumptuous reception according to the best Venetian traditions, but when one recalled that in order to afford black market luxuries for the tourists,

the natives have to go hungry on their rations, one felt like putting down his plate, knowing its contents would certainly not be thrown away. As a matter of fact, no European country could rival the Mexicans in the way of parties, though some of their films would have needed advance publicity.

It may be that movie critics become hardened by the number of festivals they attend and the quantity of films they absorb in succession, but it seems that everywhere everyone is trying very hard to say very little. There is a general dearth of ideas. That is a direct challenge to screen writers all over the world. By the way, screen writers were no more heard of at this festival than at any other, but at least their names appeared on the summaries which were handed to the journalists.

One interesting subject was tackled by the British in *Frieda*, the story of a German girl brought to England by her British husband; it needed just a little more skill to have made an excellent picture. The other two British offerings: *Temptation Harbour* and *They Made Me a Fugitive*



are certainly good pictures but bring nothing new to the cinema. The French films: *Les Freres Bouquiquant*, *Monsieur Vincent* (with dialogues by Jean Anouilh, the playwright of *Antigone* fame), *Quain Des Orfevres*, are full of excellent things, especially the last one, directed by Clouzot, but are not a revelation.

The Italian production has been disappointing; the Scandinavians came better off: the Danish *Ditte Manneskebarn* displayed a new outlook on life fraught with realism and poetry; the Swedes proved with *Iris* and *Pen-gar* that they can make comedies as well as Hollywood does. It should be pointed out that those comic films, the only ones of the Festival, were produced by a country spared by war.

#### Old Camera Tricks

Everyone expected with interest the first German film to be shown abroad since the war, but *Die Morder Sind Unter Uns* was rather disappointing. After seeing what the Italians had succeeded in doing with their ruins and little else, one had expected more from Berlin than a return to the old camera tricks of 1925 in easily recognizable studio sets. The subject was interesting: a returned German veteran, a doctor by profession, can't readjust himself to life and believes he must kill the captain who ordered the death of innocent Russian villagers and then caused the slaughter of his own troops. It could have provided the first document on post-war mentality in Berlin, if it had been treated with the utmost realism in the characterization as in the settings: one thing we have learned from this Venice festival is the invaluable importance of real exteriors to create the proper atmosphere. Instead of which the Germans used studio sets and cliché situations. However they may have been unable to do exactly as they pleased. The film was made in the Russian zone and released by Sovexfilm.

The Russians, who had sent quite a delegation to Venice—the director Alexandrow, his wife, the actress Orlova, numerous press people—had only one new film to show: Alexandrow's *Primavera*, and that was no revelation since the public had been previously treated to a review of Alexandrow's other pictures: *The Circus*, *Volga-Volga*, *Les Joyeux Garçons*, all musicals of the same vein.

Dedicating a whole day to films by one director or to films showing the same trend, or films treating similar subjects, gave a distinctive character to the *Biennale*. Its organizers planned it as one does an art exhibit or a series of concerts. One went to a Dreyer, a Renoir or a Prevost showing, as one would go to a Beethoven Festival. As in music, the succession of works by the same author may not be as pleasant for the uninitiated as a medley, but it proved very enlightening for the connoisseur, who could follow the evolution of the creator under different circumstances.

#### Art Over Industry

That presentation of films contributed to remove the commercial atmosphere which generally hovers above festivals. Two other activities of the *Biennale* helped to make the cinema appear for once more like an art than an industry: a retrospect of old films and a technical and a retrospective exhibition of the motion picture tools. There was enough material in that last one organized by the French Film Library to warrant the creation of a Museum of the Motion Picture in France, as there is already one in Italy. As for the old pictures, from *Broken Blossoms* to *Un Chapeau de Paille D'Italie*, they offered some of the best moments of the Festival. No new picture was as funny as René Clair's silent movie. The comparison between the pick of 30 years of movie making and the production of this year only is not quite fair to the modern products but it proves certain laws: the cinema is an international art, as painting or music; because pictures are to be seen all over the world, and because they are most thrilling when they allow the spectator's attention to concentrate undividedly on what he sees, dialogue should be kept at a minimum; no speech is as eloquent as a good shot. There is no question of a return to the silent movies. On the contrary, one rather expects some new invention in film making. Everyone—the public as well as the critics, in spite of those who would like to make a difference—is tired of what he is being given. The path of realism and pathos seems to have been entirely explored by the Italians. Each country can do the same now, but we are already hankering for something different. Shall it be surrealistic pictures? Color films presenting new subjects to be treated? Anyway the

screen writers all over the world should prove their mettle and the next festival—everyone in Vienna hoped it would be in Hollywood—should bring a crop of wonderful new films, and especially good American pictures.

P.S.—The Venice Biennale is now over and I am sorry I missed the last few days. The general impression is still the same—there have been too many Festivals this year and nations should come to an agreement and take turns in trying to attract the tourists and the industry crowd.

But also during the last few days some of the pictures which received some of the prizes were shown—for instance, *Sirena*, the Czech picture which received the Grand Award, (a realistic and social movie). Another Czech product, *The Tales of Capek* was thought by many critics to be even more interesting, more original. What with the numerous cartoons and puppets pictures which have garnered all the prizes of that category for the Czechs at every Festival, those two movies bring to the fore a new crowd of European movie-makers, especially interesting since they are supposed to work behind an iron curtain.

#### Awards and Politics

Politics may not have been absent from the granting of awards—I was made to understand that the jury had to resist a considerable amount of lobbying, in particular some for creating an award to the most beautiful actress which would have been meant for the Mexican Maria Felix! Of course there already is an award for the best actress and it was granted, rightly so, to Anna Magnani for her part in *Q'Onorevole Angelina*. As the leading character in that picture, La Magnani affirms the qualities she had already shown in *Open City* and in *Il Bandito*, those of an Italian Bette Davis with a terrific temperament. *Q'Onorevole Angelina*, together with the *Caccia Tragica* raised the level of the Italian productions. The *Tragic Chase*, directed by de Santis, brings another proof of the depth and intensity with which the Italians translate the problems of the day. The spectator is immersed in a feeling of solidarity which surges from the screen. In its superb technique, and especially in the way in which crowds are handled, the picture recalls the



## THE SCREEN WRITER

Russian movies of 1925. It deserved its award.

What seemed most unfair was the award of the best screen play to *Primavera*, the Russian picture directed by Alexandrov. It was obtained through a technicality—the prize was to go to an original subject, one which had not been treated previously in book form or play—and that condition eliminated of course several good pictures.

That distribution of awards recalled that of Cannes last September—the United States was equally left out because of its representation on the jury as in films. Those Festivals may not be considered important commercially by the M.P.E.A. but they are attended by the movie people and critics from all Europe. They and all the newspaper readers may wonder after a while why so few American pictures are granted an award, as the Festivals go by.

JUDITH PODSELVER

★

*After writing the above letter from Venice, Miss Podselver journeyed to Cannes, France, to observe the 1947 film festival there. In the following letter she presents a brief report of her impressions.*

Dear Screen Writer:

After a year of touring Europe, I am back where I started from: that lovely spot on the French Riviera, Cannes, the best place for festivals since all activities are centered on the *Croisette* in a 10 minutes walk from the Casino to the *Palais du Festival*, thus allowing movie people and journalists to spend every minute of the day together and reap more gossip

than could fill all the French papers. Since three other festivals have taken place since last year, the number of pictures shown this time was considerably less than previously and the award of prizes proved that it had been almost entirely a Franco-American affair. But it has been a real pleasure to find out that at last American movies have been selected deliberately for the occasion. Was it the fact that Elsa Maxwell was on the organizing committee and wanted the festival to be a success both for Cannes of which she is an honorary citizen and for the States? Is it due to the wise advices of Frank McCarthy, the MPEA representative in Paris, and his assistant, Rupert Allan?

Anyway, the distributors seem to have understood that pictures sent to festivals should be meant for the toughest critics in the world, people who, more than technique and entertainment, require a subject and ideas in their films. Not all companies sent the best pictures they might have. *Life With Father* might have been better than *Possessed* and compared with European pictures *Ivy's* psychology was thought incredibly flimsy but it may have been due to the short notice—invitations were extended at the end of June and the films had to be in by July 21st—and certain difficulties in shipping and subtitling could not be overcome in time. The problem of finding the right picture to fit the categories in which movies were entered was not always solved satisfactorily either. It is due to such a technicality that *Boomerang* did not receive the award everyone thought it deserved.

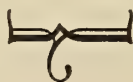
However, with three prizes—for *Crossfire*, *Dumbo*, and *Ziegfeld Fol-*

*lies*—the American production did quite well. The French only received two: for *Antoine And Antoinette*, a charming realistic comedy directed by Jacques Becker, and for *Les Maudits*, the odyssey of a Nazi submarine, a realization of Rene Clement. A picture for which Sartre had written an original screenplay, *Les Jeux Sont Faits*, proved quite disappointing. A wonderful montage of films taken between 1900 and 1914 called *Paris 1900* recreating beautifully the atmosphere of these happy days could not be fitted in the categories of pictures competing and could not receive the awards which it so richly deserved.

The growing awareness of American distributors to the need of the European public—and I think RKO should receive a special mention for having sent this year both *The Best Years Of Our Lives* and *Crossfire*—is an encouraging fact. What with the decision of the MPEA to participate in only one Film Festival a year and go only before a national jury where there would be no possibilities of international politics interfering, the next gathering of motion picture critics should be able to see the American production at its best.

To come back to what I wrote previously about the Venice Festival, I found out that the MPEA had not participated but had allowed the Italian government to select four pictures out of the numerous American movies kept at the Italian customs and show them during the *Biennale* but outside competition. That explains the showing of certain movies distributed by the major companies and answers the question I asked in the letter I sent you from Italy.

JUDITH PODSELVER



## Books: Two Novels About Hollywood

### *DIRTY EDDIE*

By Ludwig Bemelmans

### *THE SQUIRREL CAGE*

By Edwin Gilbert

THE usual Hollywood novel is an assembly line product; like books about Lincoln, or stories of beautiful female sex machines who take off their skirts in all periods of history. No publisher likes to be without one during the summer season. Mr. Bemelmans' and Mr. Gilbert's books are the two latest Model T versions of the Hollywood teaser, complete with hot and cold sex scenes. They are written, in this case, by two disappointed gentlemen who came and saw and didn't conquer Hollywood. Mr. Bemelmans will be remembered (but not by MGM) as the author of a prize theatre emptier and turkey. Mr. Gilbert, after several years of yearning and straining at the Underwood, got little in the way of credits; and after reading his novel one can be thankful for that. Neither boy sat down to write a novel; both wanted to place a few personal punches, safely in New York.

Mr. Bemelmans and Mr. Gilbert of course write of a place called Hollywood, but both books are fantasies about a Never-Never-Land. Mr. Bemelmans is the professional writer, slick, often funny, usually the snob; the perfect bus boy—as he says—who grew up to entertain duchesses. His world is the world of the pantry, the headwaiter's bedroom, the perfumed hovels of interior decorators, and the plushlined, Picasso-hung cells of the ultra-neurotics. As one reader of *Dirty Eddie* said, "Bemelmans saw Hollywood through a glass replica of Lady X's pratt." Actually he never saw Hollywood at all. He collected a

few menus from fellow waiters at Chez Roland, Romanoff's, and The Players, and he decorated his office with frenzied, badly drawn paintings, and appeared at some of the more boring parties to inspect the hors d'oeuvres and sample the goose livers. Around these few events he invents a Bemelmans' Hollywood as lush as a fan magazine's dream of life, as dishonest as a maitre d'hotel's handshake. The soggy wit is encased in an aspic of badly constructed French,

the people are gibbering, diseased puppets dressed by *Vogue*. The dialogue sounds like something left over from a hangover, rather vaguely remembered. But Mr. Bemelmans is a professional smart writer and his book is readable, sometimes amusing, and not very heavy going for anyone who can spell out French menus and doesn't think green nail polish is the last word in chic.

Mr. Gilbert, unfortunately, can't

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STEPHEN LONGSTREET, novelist, screen writer and playwright, challenges in this piece of pointed criticism the assumption that Hollywood writers and the motion picture industry are always fair game in a perpetual literary open season.



write even waiter's English, or construct plot or character. He also uses himself, very lightly disguised, as the hero. The hero is a promising young playwright (with no produced plays) who is living a happy life in a Greenwich Village cellar (gnawing on journalism, it is hinted, for a mere existence). He is brought to Hollywood at more money than he has ever seen—which he resents—and he proceeds to bitch himself out of his job so he can go back to the cellar and the Blue Plate Special in tea rooms run by old ladies of both genders. He is—he admits—the only real artist at the studio (unfortunately for us the author includes a sample of a movie script that he thinks is a masterpiece). The rest of the writers are only rich and sensual hacks; sad, deflated phalli. As the books staggers on, the whole thing becomes a dreary dream fantasy, with the characters changing facets, and the hero becoming more and more noble as he proceeds to attempt to get into bed with his secretary. What other plot there is is wretchedly constructed, and comes to nothing—not once, but several times. The writing is amateur and rather pathetic, for the author no doubt thought he was writing prose. The book ends with the hero-

writer breaking his ties with his dream Hollywood (after a dream fist fight and a dream rape of his secretary) by going to San Francisco, on his way back to his cellar. His last lines are about the purity of the air in San Francisco . . . now he can breathe again, a free man.

NEITHER book is worth considering seriously as a novel, except that they are about screen writers. In many places they will be taken as real and honest portraits of the men and women who write the motion pictures seen on the world screens. As such they are libels that all honest and competent screen writers must resent. While they make no serious claim as literature, this kind of books (only two in a long line of publishers' abortions) has slowly poisoned the mind of the serious reader, so that to him a screen writer is either a neurotic genius brought to Hollywood, seduced, trampled, stomped on, and spit out when he rises on his little integrity and tells the big bums off. After which he flees to the Village, or Capri, or to a rich widow, to write *The Great Play* or *The Great Novel* (which is never printed or produced). The other Model T screen writer, as pre-

sented in these novels, is the rich, drunken, overbearing, unread, uneducated egotist, who has sold out his talent and is living in a welter of swimming pools, Goldwyn girls, knife throwing, rump kissing and credit stealing. This whore is always the writer who gets his name on the big pictures, and the hint is that he either stole it from the neurotic genius or has taken over Irving Berlin's little colored boy, whom he flogs until he has written ten pages of fine script a day.

Both Mr. Bemelmans and Mr. Gilbert are wrong. First, of course, they did not have to fail as screen writers, and go off dragging their mangled egos between their legs. They could have stayed on here, paid attention to the craftsmanship of the screen, learned to write screenplays and been part of a great industry which offers to the writer a fair reward for his effort and his ability to tell a good story. Many novelists and playwrights have made such a success and many more will. It is the few self-defeated bits of psychiatrists' bait that unfortunately write the books about Hollywood.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

## News Notes

\* Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture are: *The British Documentary Film (I): Granton Trawler, Song of Ceylon, Night Mail, Colour Box*, Nov. 3, 4, 5, 6; *The British Documentary Film (II): Musical Poster No. 1, World of Plenty, When We Build Again, Man—One Family*, Nov. 7, 8, 9; *Before the Russian Revolution: Moscow Clad in Snow, Revenge of a Kine-matograph Cameraman, Moment Musicale, Father Sergius*, Nov. 10, 11, 12, 13; *New Beginnings: Eisenstein and Vertov: Kino-Pravda, Kombrig Ivanov, Rebellion, Mutiny in Odessa, Potemkin*, Nov. 14, 15, 16; *Two Experimental Groups: The Cloak, By the Law*, Nov. 17, 18, 19, 20; *The*

*Work of Pudovkin (I): Chess Fever, Mother*, Nov. 21, 22, 23; *The Work of Pudovkin (II): The End of St. Petersburg*, Nov. 24, 25, 26, 27; *The Films of Eisenstein (II): Ten Days That Shook the World*, Nov. 28, 29, 30; *The Work of Pudovkin (III): Storm Over Asia*, Dec. 1, 2, 3, 4.

\* French film showings on the current program of the American Gallery Films and Peoples' Educational Center at Hollywood Masonic Temple are: Nov. 3: Rene Claire's *A Nous La Liberte*; Nov. 10: *La Maternelle*; Nov. 17: *The Lower Depths*; Nov. 24: *Generals Without Buttons*; Dec. 1: *L'Atalante*; Dec. 8: *Marie-Louise*. Honorary chairmen of this program

of film showings are Herbert Biberman, Edward Dmytryk, Fritz Lang, Kenneth Macgowan, Dudley Nichols. Harold Salemsen is discussion leader and co-ordinator. For reservations phone HOLlywood 6291.

\* Pasadena Community Playhouse has scheduled *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*, by Emily Kimbrough and Cornelia Otis Skinner for Oct. 29 to Nov. 9. Marcella Cisney directs from Jean Kerr stage adaption of the book. Pacific Coast premiere of Ruth Gordon's *Years Ago* is scheduled from Nov. 12 to 23 as climax to Playhouse fall series.

\* Arthur Strawn, chairman of SWG Veterans' Committee, is making a deal with the British Broadcas-

ing Corporation for the television production of his plays. His recent three act play, *Anthony Nero*, has already been used successfully by BBC for 90 minutes of television entertainment. Amalgamated Press of Great Britain has bought first serial rights to Mr. Strawn's story, *Foolish Old Man*, published a few weeks ago by the *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Esquire* has bought a Strawn short story, *The Sentimentalist*.

★ Theodore Strauss, member of *The Screen Writer* Editorial Committee, was interviewed Sunday, Oct. 26, by Bob Dworkin as a feature of the CBS *Meet the Author* program. Strauss is the author of the recent widely discussed novel, *Moonrise*.

★ SWG member W. R. Burnett's new novel, *Yellow Sky*, will soon be published by Knopf.

★ SWG member Joseph Wechsberg's novel, *The Continental Touch*, due in January under Houghton-Mifflin imprint.

★ *The Squirrel Cage*, a life-in-Hollywood novel by SWG member Edwin Gilbert, is on the current Doubleday list.

★ SWG member Irving Stone's *Adversary in the House*, a novelized portrait of Eugene V. Debs, is getting a major promotion campaign from its publishers, Doubleday & Co.

★ SWG member Millard Lampell's new novel, *The Hero*, scheduled for early publication by Julian Messner.

★ Establishment of the first studio outside of Hollywood to offer full-time professional training in motion-picture work has been announced by Erwin Piscator, Director of the Dramatic Workshop of the New School for Social Research. Sidney Kaufman, film critic and director, heads the new Film Department, whose purpose Mr. Piscator declared is "to provide trained personnel for expanding motion picture production in New York and to create a center for study of the cinema as a cultural and social force."

The workshop course, which started October 6, includes production of complete sound films in a specially designed studio where students will write, direct, act and shoot the production, with sound, music and other technical aspects of the work under professional guidance. The many film

resources of N. Y. laboratories, sound stages, film libraries, trade unions, independent producers, and other branches of the local film industry cooperate actively with the project.

★ SWG member Jay Richard Kennedy's article, *An Approach to Pictures*, published in the June issue of *The Screen Writer*, is being reprinted in *Filme*, the Brazilian quarterly.

★ William Wyler's *No Magic Wand* and I. A. L. Diamond's *Hollywood Jabberwocky*, were reprinted from *The Screen Writer* in a recent issue of *The Cine-Technician*, a British film magazine. Mr. Diamond's article, *Darling! You Mean . . . ?* in the September issue of *The Screen Writer* was reprinted in the Sunday drama section of the Minneapolis Tribune-Star.

★ F. Hugh Herbert's *Subject: Bindle Biog*, published in the September issue of *The Screen Writer*, has been reprinted in the San Francisco *Chronicle* and the Omaha *World-Herald*.

★ SWG member Elwood Ullman has sold a short story, *Just We Two*, to *Esquire*.

A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

SEPTEMBER 1, 1947 TO OCTOBER 1, 1947

A

**GERALD D. ADAMS**  
Joint Screenplay (with Clements Ripley) *OLD LOS ANGELES*, Rep

B

**ARNOLD BELGARD**  
Joint Screenplay (with Jack Jungmeyer) *THE TENDER YEARS*, Edward Alperson Prod

**DEWITT BODEEN**  
\*Contributor to Screenplay *THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS*, RKO

**PETER R. BROOKE**  
Sole Screenplay *FOOTLIGHT RHYTHM*, (S), Par

**RICHARD BROOKS**  
Sole Original Screenplay *TO THE VICTOR*, WB

\*Academy Bulletin Only

**JOHN K. BUTLER**  
Joint Screenplay (with J. Benton Cheney) *CALIFORNIA FIREBRAND*, Rep  
Additional Dialogue *THE MAIN STREET KID*, Rep

C

**JERRY CADY**  
Joint Screenplay (with Jay Dratler) *CALLING NORTHSIDE 777*, Fox

**J. BENTON CHENEY**  
Joint Screenplay (with John K. Butler) *CALIFORNIA FIREBRAND*, Rep

**ROYAL K. COLE**  
Sole Adaptation *CALIFORNIA FIREBRAND*, Rep

**HAL COLLINS**  
Sole Screenplay and Joint Story (with Monty F. Collins) *THE OLD GRAY MAYOR*, Mono

**MONTY F. COLLINS**  
Joint Story (with Hal Collins) *THE OLD GRAY MAYOR*, Mono

D

**JAY DRATLER**  
Joint Screenplay (with Jerry Cady) *CALLING NORTHSIDE 777*, Fox

F

**JULES FURTHMAN**  
Sole Screenplay *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*, Fox

G

**WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM**  
Novel Basis *NIGHTMARE ALLEY*, Fox



## THE SCREEN WRITER

### JERRY GRUSKIN

Joint Screenplay (with Richard Sale) CAMPUS HONEYMOON, Rep

## H

### BEN HECHT

Joint Screenplay (with Charles Lederer) KISS OF DEATH, Fox  
Joint Screenplay (with Quentin Reynolds) THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS, RKO

### JOHN C. HIGGINS

Sole Original Screenplay T-MAN, Eagle Lion

### LEONARD HOFFMAN

Joint Adaptation (with Quentin Reynolds) CALLING NORTHSIDE 777, Fox

## J

### ARTHUR V. JONES

Sole Screenplay FLIGHT TO NOWHERE, Screen Guild

### JACK JUNGMEYER

Joint Screenplay (with Arnold Belgard) THE TENDER YEARS, Edward Alperson Prod

## K

### VIRGINIA KELLOGG

Story Basis T-MAN, Eagle Lion

### ARTHUR KOBER

Sole Adaptation MY OWN TRUE LOVE, Par

## L

### CHARLES LEDERER

Joint Screenplay (with Ben Hecht) KISS OF DEATH, Fox

\*Academy Bulletin Only

### MARY LOOS

\*Contributor to Screenplay THE TENDER YEARS, Edward Alperson Prod

## M

### RANALD MACDOUGALL

Sole Screenplay CHRISTOPHER BLAKE, WB

### DON MARTIN

Sole Original Screenplay THE PRETENDER, Rep

### DOROTHEA KNOX MARTIN

Sole Screenplay HOLLYWOOD BARN DANCE Jack Schwartz Prod.) Screen Guild

### DORIS MILLER

Additional Dialogue THE PRETENDER, Rep

### JOSEF MISCHEL

Joint Screenplay (with Theodore Strauss) MY OWN TRUE LOVE, Par

### RICHARD MURPHY

Sole Screenplay DEEP WATER, Fox

## O

### ARTHUR E. ORLOFF

Sole Original Screenplay CHEYENNE TAKES OVER, PRC

## R

### MARTIN RACKIN

Sole Original Screenplay RACE STREET, RKO

### SAMSON RAPHAELSON

Sole Screenplay GREEN DOLPHIN STREET, MGM

### QUENTIN REYNOLDS

Joint Screenplay (with Ben Hecht) THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS, RKO  
Joint Adaptation (with Leonard Hoffman) CALLING NORTHSIDE 777, Fox

### CLEMENTS RIPLEY

Story and Joint Screenplay (with Gerald Adams) OLD LOS ANGELES, Rep

## S

### THOMAS R. ST. GEORGE

Story CAMPUS HONEYMOON, Rep

### JERRY SACKHEIM

Sole Screenplay THE MAIN STREET KID, Rep

### RICHARD SALE

Joint Screenplay (with Jerry Gruskin) CAMPUS HONEYMOON, Rep  
\*Contributor to Screenplay THE TENDER YEARS, Edward Alperson Productions

### BARRY SHIPMAN

Sole Original Screenplay SIX-GUN LAW, Col

### THEODORE STRAUSS

Joint Screenplay (with Josef Mischel) MY OWN TRUE LOVE, Par

## T

### MAURICE TOMBRAGEL

Sole Screenplay THE PRINCE OF THIEVES (Kay Pic.) Col

### CATHERINE TURNEY

Sole Screenplay WINTER MEETING, WB

## V

### ALLEN VINCENT

Joint Screenplay (with Irmgard Von Cube) JOHNNY BELINDA, WB

### IRMGARD VON CUBE

Joint Screenplay (with Allen Vincent) JOHNNY BELINDA, WB

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Samuel Hoffenstein

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The

# Screen Writer

## Freedom vs. Fear

### *The Thomas-Hearst Challenge to the Screen*

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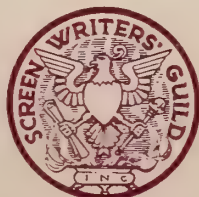
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LESTER KOENIG: *Gregg Toland, Film Maker*  
PAUL S. NATHAN: *A Man Can Stand Up*  
E. S. MILLS, JR.: *Television's New Journalism*  
DAVID CHANDLER: *The Corporate Author*  
JUDITH PODSELVER: *Letter From Paris*

Editorial • SWG Bulletin: Election and Annual Meeting Report  
SWG Studio Chairmen • Correspondence • News Notes  
Manuscript Market





# Letter From Paris

JUDITH PODSELFER,  
European correspondent for  
The Screen Writer, writes the  
following letter concerning the  
growth of motion picture clubs  
in France.

THE year which followed the liberation of France witnessed the amazing growth of the "cine-clubs" movement. Today the Federation Francaise des Ciné Clubs consists of 80 clubs with 150,000 members. For France, a country of 40 million inhabitants, where each person is supposed to go to movies only 10 times a year, this is an amazing number of people specially interested in motion pictures.

It has been said that a Frenchman does not need to go to the theatre since he can create his own plays sitting in a cafe and talking to his friends. The cine-clubs prove this to be somewhat exaggerated. There are clubs even in towns of 5,000 inhabitants. Some have been started in factories, in the famous Renault automobile works for instance. All kind of groups join in the Federation. Each club chooses its own program from a list presented by the "committee of programs." This committee is responsible before the State—which grants subsidies to all cultural organizations—that none of the clubs are working on a commercial basis. The renting of the hall and of the film is covered by the monthly dues which the members pay.

Georges Sadoul, the general secretary of the Federation, told me his organization had found very great help and understanding from the American distributors. They have been very generous in letting the Federation rent American pictures; of course those that have no commercial value any longer. As for French films, after 10 years, they cannot collect any rights.

The idea of showing pictures which

(Continued on Page 52)

# The Screen Writer

Vol. 3, No. 7

DECEMBER 1947

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## A Special Section

# Freedom vs. Fear:

## The Fight for the American Mind

YOU DON'T NEED TO PASS A LAW TO CHOKE OFF FREE SPEECH OR SERIOUSLY CURTAIL IT.  
YOU CAN'T MAKE GOOD AND HONEST MOTION PICTURES IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR.

—Eric Johnston, president of the  
Motion Picture Association

IT BECAME PERFECTLY APPARENT THAT THE PURPOSE (of the Thomas Committee) WAS  
TO DICTATE AND CONTROL, THROUGH THE DEVICE OF THE HEARINGS, WHAT GOES ON THE SCREEN  
OF AMERICA.

THIS IS NO CONCERN OF ANY CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE. IT IS THE CONCERN SOLELY  
OF THOSE WHO PRODUCE MOTION PICTURES.

WE SHALL FIGHT TO CONTINUE A FREE SCREEN IN AMERICA.

—Paul V. McNutt, special counsel  
for the Motion Picture Association

**W**HEN the stentorian gavel of J. Parnell Thomas, (R) N. J., opened the hearings of the Un-American Activities Committee on October 20, the attitude of the Motion Picture Association's chief spokesmen toward the Thomas Committee was friendly, even cooperative. But only for that day. For, within the next 48 hours a profound change took place. Gone was the air of sweet reasonableness in which both the Committee and the industry spokesmen hovered.

Why? What brought from both Paul V. McNutt

and Eric Johnston the unequivocal statements concerning the Thomas Committee's aims which are quoted directly above?

The answer holds significance and hope for all Americans who either patronize or contribute their talents toward the newest, and to this day, the freest medium of expression—the American screen.

The attitude of the policy making leaders of the industry changed because seeing the Thomas committee in action changed their understanding of the meaning and purpose of the committee. In this case the



## THE SCREEN WRITER

house committee on un-American activities acted as a true catalytic agent; the reaction in the top levels of the industry was swift. The Washington catalysis occurred when the committee dropped into the situation the corrosive acid of film censorship through fear. That changed everything.

It was then that Paul V. McNutt and Eric Johnston put into words their recognition that the hearings were more than an attempt to police the opinions of a few individuals; that they were in fact a device to gain control of what goes on the American screen.

What happened then has happened many times before in our history. It happened in Boston in 1774. It happened when Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. It happened when the Fugitive Slave Law went on the books. It happened in the public reaction to the Palmer raids of 25 years ago. The American people dislike having their basic liberties pushed around. Our Bill of Rights is a pretty good common denominator for Americans.

The fight for a free screen in America has been thrust into the foreground of the greater fight for a free American mind. If success could be won by those who want to control the screen through the censorship of fear and forced conformity of opinion, a long step would be taken toward control of the American mind. It would be a step away from the America we have always known, and toward the kind of America most of us hope we will never know.

Mr. Thomas and Mr. Rankin and their committee won a very considerable success a few months ago in creating fear in the radio industry. As a result, several intelligent and mildly liberal commentators were removed from the air. That easy victory was profoundly disturbing to all persons to whom freedom of the air is more than a printed phrase in the FCC Blue Book.

At the recent hearings concerning the Hollywood film industry Mr. Thomas repeatedly pointed out the importance of the movie impact on mass opinion. He is right, of course. He recognizes the fact that the optic nerve is the shortcut to the brain. Subjugation of the motion picture industry, the power to tell it what it must and must not put into pictures, the right to dictate the political and economic opinions of those who create pictures—all this would be an even more telling victory for those who want to make all the agencies of communication conform to their own special orthodoxies.

What would come next on the list—the press, the stage, literature, religion, education? All of them, undoubtedly. The totalitarian appetite of such a committee is not easily appeased. The stage was virulently attacked during the recent motion picture hearings,

and one witness described the University of California at Los Angeles as a “communist college.”

Already the book publishing industry is glancing nervously at the Thomas Committee procedures. *Publishers' Weekly*, in its November 1 issue, warns the book trade that it may be in for trouble, and points out “the mounting intimidation that can demoralize thinking and writing.”

**S**UPPOSE Mr. Thomas, Mr. Rankin and those represented by them succeed in this drive for total control of the American mind? Our America will be changed from a dynamic to a static nation. We will live on a dead level of conformity. Dissent will be liquidated, and with it the checks and balances that make democracy work.

It can probably be assumed that Mr. Thomas, Mr. Rankin and those who work through them have not consciously set out to subvert our traditional American way of life. It must be that they are afraid of something, and their fear seeks to generate fear in others. It must be that they have suffered a tragic loss of faith in our land and in our Jeffersonian principle that even repugnant opinions should be permitted free expression so long as other opinion is free to combat them. It must be that they no longer have real confidence that prosperity and peace can endure for very long, and so are trying to batten down our mental hatches in preparation for the storms they vaguely fear.

Whatever it is that motivates them, our concern here and now is the stopping of this drift toward the controlled conformity of the American mind. The people of the motion picture industry, with powerful support, have challenged this committee and spoken up for freedom of the screen. The fight is in the open now. It must be won.

It must be won for the sake of our own industry. No robot art has ever flourished. Film making under a Thomas-Rankin-Hearst censorship would drown quietly in a sea of red ink. We cannot afford to make worse pictures when England, France, Italy, Switzerland and other nations are making better ones.

Anyone who doubts we are in the midst of a real fight for a free screen should read the editorials now appearing in the Hearst and kindred newspapers calling for a federal police censorship of motion pictures. The integrity of the screen must be maintained as part of the greater fight to protect the freedom of the American mind. A motion picture industry united in that fight will be contributing its share to the historic task of keeping America free. *The Screen Writer* herewith presents a special section devoted to analysis and opinion concerning the issues involved.

# The Real Issue Is Censorship

ON the front pages of *The Los Angeles Examiner* and Mr. William Randolph Hearst's other newspapers of November 5, 1947, appeared an editorial captioned:

## FILM CENSORSHIP IS ONLY RECOURSE

It was a plea for a federal police censorship of motion picture content. Said the spokesman for Mr. Hearst: "The failure and refusal of the motion picture industry to refrain from the employment of Communist writers, actors, directors and producers leaves the Congress with no other recourse than to impose a system of FEDERAL CENSORSHIP."

The editorial then pointed out that "the employment of Communists throughout the motion picture industry is a general practice," and said that "the recent hearings in Washington had clearly established that fact." It also said the industry is complacent about the matter "and perhaps even more in favor of the practice than opposed to it."

From the premise thus established the Hearst editorial goes on to say:

"So of course there has been a continuous and persistent production of COMMUNISTIC FILMS.

"What other recourse is there for the country, if the motion picture industry itself will not prevent Communistic deception and corruption of the American people, but to CENSOR THE FILMS?"

Another front page editorial in this current Hearst crusade openly calls for the establishment of a federal police censorship of the motion picture industry.

Again Mr. Hearst attacks what he calls "the responsible managers of the film business," and since they appear from the Hearstian point of view to be part of a conspiracy to produce a constant flow of communistic films, the editorial says that "the only thing is for the GOVERNMENT ITSELF to see that Communism in the motion pictures does not deceive and corrupt the people."

It is pointed out that the Congress, through its own authorized committee, has brought the facts to light. The editorial concludes:

"In view of the facts, it has become a paramount duty of the Congress—under the interstate commerce clause of the Constitution, the police powers of the Government and the national defense acts—to deal drastically and immediately with the situation by ENACTING and ENFORCING an adequate Federal film censorship law."

On November 12, in a long editorial captioned "CENSORSHIP FOR THE FILMS," Mr. Hearst continues the assumption that the executive heads of the motion picture industry are subverting the screen and producing communistic pictures. Says this editorial:

"It is sheer poltroonery or worse for the motion picture magnates to provide a medium for Communism . . .

"AN INDUSTRY WHICH PUTS ITS BOX OFFICE RETURNS ABOVE THE FLAG AND THE NATION'S SECURITY DESERVES NO CONSIDERATION: For bad as it is to defile people's minds with filth, it is vastly worse to corrupt and debauch their patriotism.

"Since the movie magnates are unwilling to keep Communism out of the films, it is necessary for the Government to do so."

It was widely recognized at once that this Hearst-led plan for a federal censorship of motion pictures is based on a wholly false assumption that pictures favoring communism have been produced, and that it probably represents the major motivation behind the Thomas committee hearings.

The American Civil Liberties Union said in a statement:

"The conclusion that the recent hearings before the House un-American Activities Committee justify censorship is nonsense on its face. No evidence was produced to show the production of un-American or pro-Communist films.

"Proposals for Federal censorship are not new. Bills have been before Congress many times and they have gotten simply nowhere. Opposition today would be as great as in the past, especially to a wildeyed proposal not only to censor films but to dictate the personnel of the industry. The American public can be counted on to deal at the box office with an un-American propaganda. Proposals to impose censorship display a distrust in the American people. We need no guardians to tell us what we may see, hear, or read."

In a Quentin Reynolds by-lined news story *PM* said:

"If the hearings in Washington proved anything at all, they proved that there is about as much successful Communistic influence in Hollywood as there is in General Motors. Again and again Paul McNutt, representing the producers, asked the Committee members to name the films they said contained Communistic propaganda. Thomas maintained a discreet silence on this point. Producer Doré Schary, a brilliant and respected member of the Hollywood higher echelon, said that he had never seen a picture which tried to sell Communism to the public. Chairman Thomas indicated more than once that any picture which showed a banker as the villain was in effect Communist propaganda. He forgot that millions of us were brought up



on the Horatio Alger stories wherein Ragged Tom or Tattered Dick were always the virtuous and the heroic and the town banker was the meanie. This hoary formula so repetitiously used by Hollywood bears a much closer relationship to Alger than it does to Marx."

Eric Johnston commented:

"I intend to use every influence at my command to keep the screen free. I don't propose that the Government shall tell the motion picture industry, directly or by coercion, what kind of pictures it should make. I am as wholeheartedly against that as I would be against dictating to the press or the radio, to the publishers of books or magazines."

The magazine *Boxoffice*, which describes itself as the pulse of the motion picture industry, says:

"Would Mr. Hearst like to have his industry blackened as he is trying to blacken the motion picture industry? And what a lambasting he would give to

anyone who advocated **FEDERAL CENSORSHIP OF NEWSPAPERS!** We'll venture that with righteous indignation he would quote the First Amendment to the Constitution in **BOLDFACE CAPS.**"

Robert W. Kenny, former attorney-general of California and counsel for the 19 so-called "unfriendly" witnesses, said of the Hearst censorship proposal:

"The real purpose of the Thomas Committee has at last been made clear by its own reliable ally in the American press. From this source there has now come a baldfaced demand for Federal censorship.

"This brings the fight out into the open. The 'hostile' witnesses have been saying all along that the real issue is censorship versus a free screen and the Hearst press has now confirmed this.

"Unintimidated Americans have traditionally hated censorship in any form. Now that the Hearst-Thomas real intentions have been unmasked I am confident that the Thomas Committee will be promptly and overwhelmingly repudiated by the American people."

---

## On a Note of Warning

NORMAN CORWIN

*NORMAN CORWIN is the distinguished radio writer-producer. This article is based on an address he recently made analyzing the issues involved in the Thomas committee Hollywood hearings.*

THE other day I heard the un-American Activities Committee described by one of its many detractors as a political survey with a lunatic fringe on top. This seemed to me a benign view, as well as inaccurate, because the committee is actually high-powered and fast-moving, and sane enough to know exactly where it is going. Or at least where it would like to go.

For a long while even people who were aware of what this committee stood for, looked upon it as a bore, an irritation, a minor itch not worth doing anything about. The methods, statements and actions of the committee under Dies and his successors, had very often a kind of zany essence which deceived many into thinking that it was harmless; that beyond assassinating or harassing a few defenseless characters and getting acres of publicity in the yellow press, the committee was after all no real menace to democracy in this country.

That this optimism was unjustified is made clear by the reaction of large sections of the American press and public in defense of the freedom not of individuals, but of the motion picture industry itself—freedom from the tyranny of illegal, unconstitutional and immoral attempts to impose a thought control of rigid conformity, by means of intimidation, innuendo and naked slander.

Though I am not a member of the motion picture industry, I do happen to have studied some of the passes made at the radio industry by this committee last year. And the committee's objectives, now as then, are quite clear.

Let's examine these objectives, and see how they apply to the film industry; let's see why Hollywood has been honored so signally.

By definition, the objectives of the un-American Committee are supposed to be the recommendation of legislation to combat subversive activity. Let us sup-

pose, for the sake of argument, that everybody who is labelled a Communist by the committee IS a Communist. Let us assume also that Communists are intent on overthrowing the government by force and are committing sabotage to this end—a charge, by the way, that will have to be fought out between the committee and the United States Supreme Court, which has already three times made rulings to the contrary of this assumption. However, let's forget that for the moment, and, again, for the sake of argument, suppose that the Communists ARE definitely committed to sabotage and overthrow.

Now the un-American committee itself would interpret sabotage and overthrow to mean blowing up trains and factories, sinking ships, starting fires, destroying food supplies, seizing government buildings, lynching minorities, controlling the press, denying free speech, abolishing trial by jury, creating civic unrest, and disrupting the economic life of the country.

Well, let's look at the record. There *has* been some lynching of minorities, but this happens to have been done by southern Democrats in the home states of some of the members of the un-American committee.

There *has* been some destroying of food supplies, not by Bolsheviks but by businessmen in order to jack up food prices. I refer particularly to the recent burning of tons of surplus potatoes at a time when most of the world is hungry.

There *has* been some seizing of government buildings, not by Reds, but by the son of a southern Democratic governor named Talmadge, in the home state of Congressman Wood of the un-American committee.

There *has* been some abolition of trial by jury, but this was on the executive order of the White House, in the case of any and all government employees accused of "disloyalty."

There *has* been some civic unrest, such as race riots in Detroit and Harlem, and zoot suit troubles in Los Angeles, but these were set in motion by goons of the Christian Front, Black Legion, Silver Shirts, and KKK.

There *has* been some disruption of economic life, but this was accomplished by a Republican congress and the National Association of Manufacturers, both of which couldn't wait to kill OPA and other controls.

There *has* been some control of the press, but this, according to the report of the University of Chicago's Commission on the Freedom of the Press, is the work of newspaper publishers themselves.

The Thomas-Rankin committee, which is supposed to investigate subversive activities, has investigated none of these.

There have been instances in which people testifying to their political beliefs, have been denied freedom of speech (violation of Article I of the Bill of Rights);

have been denied the right to be represented by counsel in open hearing (violation of another constitutional guarantee); denied the right to a transcript of proceedings (which even in ordinary criminal cases is made available to defense as well as prosecution); have been denied the right to present their own witnesses; or to cross-examine opposing witnesses. The denial of such rights would seem to be of prime consideration to anyone investigating un-American activities. But not to the Thomas-Rankin committee. On the contrary, it has *itself* denied these very rights, and in doing so has perverted its name and its function.

Instead of being the protector of the constitution, it is itself unconstitutional.

Instead of being a defender of the Bill of Rights, it is a leading violator of it.

Instead of being the watchdog of Democracy, it is a jackal feeding on civil liberties.

This committee, which was set up to propose and define legislation, has instead set itself up to define Americanism—as though there were not ample and eminently workable definitions made long ago in this subject by qualified experts. Rankin and Thomas have undertaken to rewrite the definitions of Jefferson, Lincoln, Emerson, Holmes, Brandeis.

The attack on the Thomas-Rankin committee is not synonymous with a defense of communism, its tenets, its legality or its methods; and nothing of what I am saying is directed to that end. The issue is that of freedom of expression and conscience versus denial of that freedom—a denial in which communism happens to be largely a convenient and workable pretext, used to its greatest effect by the committee.

**B**UT to get back to our original question: Why Hollywood? Why an attack on the motion picture industry?

The answer is plain: The screen is the most important and far-reaching medium of culture in the world today. And a free culture, by its very existence, is a bulwark against tyranny. That is why Hitler, Mussolini and the Japs went after culture with guns, nooses, guillotines and lethal gas. That is why the Germany that once produced Beethoven and Bach could offer up nothing but the Horst Wessel song. That is why the Blackshirts slapped Toscanini when he refused to conform with some fascist committee's idea of true Italianism.

Hollywood's best films have, in increasing numbers, been humane and democratic in content. For example, the jackpot Academy Award winner, *The Best Years Of Our Lives*, has been attacked as subversive by supporters of the committee here in Hollywood. Naturally. The picture is humane and democratic. It was



written by a liberal, directed by a liberal; its star performer is a liberal. Do liberals have a right to make Academy Award pictures, or don't they? With apologies to Voltaire, I, being a Roosevelt Democrat, defend to the death the right of Southern Democrats and even Republicans to make Academy Award pictures.

*The Farmer's Daughter* had few if any admirers, among the thought control korps here in Hollywood. Upton Close disapproved of it, of course, on the radio. And *Crossfire*, being against anti-Semitism, was also suspect. The boxoffice returns have indicated that it is hugely appreciated by the American public. But its director and producer have not been awarded four stars by the Thomas-Rankin committee. Not exactly four stars. Two citations.

I will not take space to go down through a list of titles. The main point is that the men who make pictures in this town, pictures that succeed both commercially and artistically, and at the same time serve a brilliant ambassadorship for the United States before the rest of the world—these people have been hauled before the un-American committee.

Why?

Have their pictures at any time advocated overthrowing the government by force? Blowing up trains? Sinking ships? Seizing government buildings? Lynching minorities? Destroying goods? Creating shortages? Abolishing trial by jury? Controlling the press? Disrupting the national economy?

On the contrary, their pictures have advocated respect for the minority—witness *Crossfire*. And responsible citizenship—witness *The Farmer's Daughter*. And an appreciation of the American democratic tradition—witness *A Man To Remember*, *Abe Lincoln In Illinois*, *Yellowjack*, *The Jolson Story*, *Sergeant York*—and so on and on.

Obviously one of the main aims of the Hollywood inquisition is to impose censorship—censorship by intimidation of individual writers, directors, producers and even heads of studios. As of today, it happens to be censorship of what may or may not be said regarding minorities, labor, economy, foreign policy, or governmental institutions. Tomorrow it may be censorship of religion, education, history or anything else. After all, how many decimal points are there between saying that a man may not make a pro-labor or pro-racial equality or pro-United Nations film, and saying that he may not make a pro-Catholic or pro-Jefferson or pro-Zola film?

Hollywood already has a self-imposed censorship which more than covers the waterfront, and the industry needs no further help in this direction from any

of the eager volunteers around the country. Least of all does it want Thomas and Rankin censoring its product.

The heads of studios in Hollywood are experienced men, by and large men of responsibility and independent judgment. They can all read a newspaper and a script, and they know the time of day and the day of the month. They are not gullible fools, to be easily gutted by borers from within. They are in the business of making films that the public likes. And it is every bit as much an insult to them, as to the men who are producing their films, to suggest that propaganda of a subversive character has been put over on them.

The committee's attack on Hollywood has been the most brazen one to date. It was packaged to attract great publicity, which of course is pre-guaranteed in the yellow press; it was designed to scare the hell out of the industry. If the committee wins this round, it will be well on its way to becoming the heavyweight champion of repression and intellectual terror—for then it can go after less powerful and articulate mediums, and knock over people of smaller name value.

AS I said before, I'm not in the picture business and one might ask what an assault on the freedom of the film industry has to do with a radio man. Well, an attack on the right of Doré Schary to produce *Crossfire* is an attack on my right to produce *One World Flight*; an attack on the freedom of any part of motion pictures is an attack on all parts, just as an attack on Pearl Harbor was an attack on Los Angeles, Indianapolis and Baltimore. A threat to the freedom of expression of Lewis Milestone and Larry Parks is a threat to the freedom of the radio industry, the printed page and the spoken word, a threat to the rights of composers and conductors and painters.

This is my fight just as much as it's the fight of Adrian Scott and Darryl Zanuck and L. B. Mayer and Humphrey Bogart and you and the former vice-president of the United States who was denied the right to speak in Hollywood Bowl, and the Negro who is denied the right to sit on certain seats in a bus, and the group of painters whose canvases were not permitted to be shown in foreign countries, and the singer who was not permitted to sing in Peoria, and the member of the Anglo-American Commission on Palestine who was not permitted to speak in a town in upstate California, and the accused clerk who is not permitted to face his accuser.

We're all in it, all the way. Freedom, like this nation whose proudest symbol it has always been, is indivisible.

# The Judas Goats

By LILLIAN HELLMAN

LILLIAN HELLMAN, a member of SWG, is widely known as a dramatist, having to her credit *Watch on the Rhine*, *Another Part of the Forest*, *The Little Foxes* and many other plays.

IT was a week of turning the head in shame; of the horror of seeing politicians make the honorable institution of Congress into a honky tonk show; of listening to craven men lie and tattle, pushing each other in their efforts to lick the boots of their vilifiers; publicly trying to wreck the lives, not of strangers, mind you, but of men with whom they have worked and eaten and played, and made millions.

No less the week of shame because of its awful comedy; the sight of the Congress of the United States of America being advised and lectured by a Mr. Adolphe Menjou, a haberdashers' gentleman; ladies screaming in elderly pleasure at the news that Mr. Robert Taylor was forced to act in a movie—act in a movie. Act. Act is not the correct word for what Mr. Taylor does in pictures; the professionally awkward stammering of Mr. Gary Cooper who knew that Communist scripts had been submitted to him, but couldn't remember their names or their authors. And why couldn't he remember? Because he reads at night. That's sensible enough; naturally one cannot remember what one reads in the dark. Why not turn on the light, you might ask yourself.

But one character only out-did the other. To me, even Mrs. Rogers, mother of the middleaged queen, was put in the shade by the most blasphemous and irreligious remark I have ever heard in public; Mr. Leo McCarey spoke of God as a "character" in one of his pictures.

A sickening, sickening, immoral and degraded week. And why did it take place? It took place because those who wish war have not the common touch. Highly placed gentlemen are often really gentlemen, and don't know how to go about these things. Remember that

when it was needed, in Europe, they had to find the house painter and gangster to make fear work and terror acceptable to the ignorant. Circuses will do it, and this was just such a circus; hide the invasion of the American Constitution with the faces of movie actors; pander to ignorance by telling people that ignorance is good, and lies even better; bring on the millionaire movie producer and show that he too is human, he too is frightened and cowardly. Take him away from his golden house and make him a betrayer and a fool for those who like such shows, and enjoy such moral degradation.

But why this particular industry, these particular people? Has it anything to do with Communism? Of course not. There has never been a single line or word of Communism in any American picture at any time. There has never or seldom been ideas of any kind. Naturally, men scared to make pictures about the American Negro, men who have only in the last year allowed the word Jew to be spoken in a picture, men who took more than ten years to make an anti-Fascist picture, those are frightened men and you pick frightened men to frighten first. Judas goats; they'll lead the others, maybe, to the slaughter for you. The others will be the radio, the press, the publishers, the trade unions, the colleges, the scientists, the churches—all of us. All of us who believe in this lovely land and its freedoms and rights, and who wish to keep it good and make it better.

They frighten mighty easy, and they talk mighty bad. For one week they made us, of course, the laughing stock of the educated and decent world. I suggest the rest of us don't frighten so easy. It's still not un-American to fight the enemies of one's country. Let's fight.

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*Abuses of freedom of speech ought to be suppressed, but to whom dare we commit the care of doing it?*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



# All-American Opinion on the Un-American Committee

THOMAS MANN

I have the honor to expose myself as a hostile witness. I testify that I am very much interested in the moving picture industry and that since my arrival in the United States nine years ago, I've seen a great many Hollywood films. If communist propaganda had been smuggled into any of them, it must have been most thoroughly hidden. I, for one, never noticed anything of the sort.

I testify, moreover, that to my mind the ignorant and superstitious persecution of the believers in a political and economic doctrine which is, after all, the creation of great minds and great thinkers,—I testify that this persecution is not only degrading for the persecutors themselves but also very harmful to the cultural reputation of this country. As an American citizen of German birth, I finally testify that I am painfully familiar with certain political trends. Spiritual intolerance, political inquisitions, and declining legal security, and all this in the name of an alleged "state of emergency" . . . this is how it started in Germany. What followed was fascism and what followed fascism was war.

ARCHER WINSTEN

Motion Picture Editor of New York Post

THE call for Federal Censorship of the movies, which the Hearst press has kindly spelled out in lead editorials for those who naively thought nothing but belling the Reds was in progress, is a threat to everyone.

Creative artists need no warning of damage the dead hand of censorship can impose. They have already been cursed by producers' success tropism. They know the internal censorship which automatically rejects the idea for a switcheroo on the old success.

The scared millionaire producers, habitually trying to roll with every punch into their next Internal Revenue tussle, do need to be warned. Lacking an excess of idealism, they might be persuaded to weigh the convenience of Federal approval against the capricious deletions of City and State Boards of Self-Expression.

The cautious billionaire banks, ever alert for profit without risk, could be expected to cotton to Federal Censorship. They might consider it the killing of two birds with one stone, insuring both standardization and freedom from ideas, subversive or otherwise.

The public itself, at least that constantly deluded sector which believes morality is external and therefore subject to law, could easily fool itself again by trying to cure all with a law.

These will be their rewards: artistic oblivion, which Hollywood has already courted with vulgar display

and catering to adolescent minds; slow financial strangulation for the money-men as they gradually re-learn the fundamental that artists, like eagles, don't create in captivity; and annihilation of the movie-going public by means of boredom and a cream-puff diet.

What Hollywood desperately needs is not more censorship but more freedom; not the ousting of Reds, but the induction of anyone who possesses the blessed Promethean fire of belief; not a mill-stone around the neck, but a kick up towards the stars.

What Hollywood needs is Americans who can fight harder and better for Freedom than any Red.

ROBERT E. SHERWOOD

I read in *Time* that when Chairman Thomas asked Adolphe Menjou what he thought of the charge that the Committee was trying to censor movies, the Gentleman of Distinction fearlessly stated, "I think that is infantile and juvenile; it couldn't be made by any man with the intelligence of a louse."

All right, Adolphe—count me in with the infantile and juvenile and the lice. I cannot see that the Committee had any other purpose but censorship of the movies by intimidation (except, of course, the natural, human desire to make the headlines). I don't think that the Committee or you uttered a word of protest when Mrs. Lela Rogers boasted that she had sought to censor scripts to protect little Ginger from contamination.

I go along with an article by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in the *New York Times*, in which he said, "Many conservatives are happily pouncing upon the Communist scare as an excuse for silencing all critics of business supremacy." But, then—I must be suspicious of anything I read in the *New York Times*, for I believe that my old friend, Rupert Hughes, in his testimony before the Committee, charged that its book review department was controlled by Communists.

If you go before the Committee again, Adolphe, please do me a favor and ask Chairman Thomas this question:

"Do you agree with William Randolph Hearst that federal censorship of motion pictures should be imposed? Answer *yes* or *no*!"

And if you love democracy so much, Adolphe, that you want to kill it ("for each man kills something he loves") just put control of it or any part of it in the hands of J. Parnell Thomas (né Feeney) or William Randolph Hearst.

MOSS HART

A FEW months ago I also worked as a screenwriter in Hollywood—engaged to do the screenplay on the best-selling novel *Gentlemen's Agreement*. I was



## SAMUEL GOLDWYN

very proud to work on such a project. I was very proud that Hollywood had the courage to make a film showing the truth about that insidious disease—religious bigotry. Now I'm wondering if my employers and I were not fortunate to finish that project before Mr. Thomas began his fantastic hearings, since there seems to be evidence that a motion picture which tells the truth about our country, right or wrong, is considered heresy by the Committee on un-American Activities.

## BENNETT CERF

THE ostensible purpose of the un-American Activities investigation of Hollywood was to expose its domination by Communist elements. What the Committee succeeded principally in accomplishing, however, was to give the American public a graphic picture of Fascism in action. It was a warning that will not go unheeded. If Hollywood can be bullied into producing only the kind of stories that fall in with this Committee's opinions and prejudices, it seems obvious to me that the publishers of books, magazines and newspapers will most certainly be next on the agenda.

## EDWARD R. MURROW

CBS Commentator and Correspondent

IN general Congressional committees have concerned themselves with what individuals, organizations or corporations have or have not done, rather than with what individuals think. It has always seemed to this reporter that movies should be judged by what appears on the screen, newspapers by what appears in print, and radio by what comes out of the loudspeaker. The personal beliefs of individuals would not seem to be a legitimate field for inquiry, either by government or by other individuals.

Certain government agencies . . . are obliged to maintain security without doing violence to the essential liberties of the citizens who work for them. That may require special and wholly defensible security measures. But no such problem arises with instruments of mass communication. In that area, there would seem to be two alternatives. Either we believe in the intelligence, good judgment, balance and native shrewdness of the American people, or we believe that governments should investigate, intimidate and finally legislate. The choice is as simple as that.

The right of dissent, or if you prefer, the right to be wrong, is surely fundamental to the existence of a democratic society. That's the right that went first in every nation that stumbled down the trail toward totalitarianism.

## GEORGE S. KAUFMAN

FOR one week we have seen government by gavel. We have seen a thousand years of common law rewritten to allow a congressional committee to presume a citizen guilty before such guilt is proven.

We have seen the beginning of a shabby melodrama, with Mr. Thomas playing the part of prompter. But in American life we need no prompter. So far this first phase has been an indecent tragedy of fear. We must see to it that this un-American spectacle does not become a continuous performance.

I HAVE always been opposed to censorship of motion pictures by the government, and today I am more convinced than ever before that the path of censorship of ideas is the road to the destruction of our industry. When we put in the hands of government the right to mark out the limits within which we may think and express ourselves on the screen we will be losing a very precious part of our heritage. Creative work cannot be produced in a climate of fear of the censor.

This is something which transcends by far the interests of the motion picture industry alone. It is a matter which must be of vital concern not only to us but to the theatre, the publishing industry, the press, the radio and, in fact, to the American people as a whole. Censorship of thought must be resisted as vigorously as is possible within the framework of our laws and our Constitution, for liberties once lost are not easily regained. It is better to battle to protect our rights than to have to fight to regain them.

But the preservation of our liberties depends in great measure upon the sense of responsibility with which we use them. Every one of us in Hollywood—writers, actors, directors, producers—has an infinitely greater responsibility than people on the outside, for everything we say or do is immediately charged to Hollywood as a whole by the American people. It therefore becomes of paramount importance that everyone who has the interests of our industry at heart realize that judicious *self-restraint* may be much more helpful in retaining our freedoms than undisciplined exercise of rights.

## MAX LERNER

In PM

ANYTHING short of a clear-cut repudiation of the Thomas Committee's right to meddle in the freedom of movie-making will be fatal. The strategy of Rep. Thomas is becoming evident enough. He hints darkly of spy-secrets and supersonic planes; but the answer on that is that, if he has any evidence of sedition in the case of any individual, it has nothing to do with movie-making as such or the industry as such, and he can take his evidence to the courts. He also promises a list of 79 Hollywood Communists, hoping no doubt to get a discussion going as to who belongs on the list and who doesn't. Such a discussion would be a trap to entangle the unwary. For the issue is not who is a Communist in Hollywood, but whether the Committee has any more right to interfere with the content of movies than it would have to interfere with the content of books or newspapers.

The process of movie-making in Hollywood is becoming almost as much a belt-line process as that of auto-making in Detroit. The drive is toward standardization and formulas. What can alone save the Hollywood pictures from falling far behind the European pictures is a renewed emphasis on the artistic integrity and the artistic freedom of the men who make the pictures.

And here we come to the second great danger of the Thomas Committee adventure. Its inevitable consequence must be to terrorize the few remaining people



## THE SCREEN WRITER

in Hollywood who still care about making great pictures. To strike at their freedom is to strike at their creativeness. Artists in uniform are not artists; they are soldiers. What the Thomas Committee is trying desperately to do is to make out of everyone connected with the movie industry a uniformed soldier in the armies of reaction.

Oct. 23, 1947

*CLAUDE PEPPER*

U. S. Senator from Florida.

ON Thursday, October 23, the American delegate to the United Nations, Warren R. Austin, solemnly warned the nations of the world against putting "shackles on the mind of man and a gag in his mouth." Even as this eloquent statement of American belief in freedom of speech was resounding in the meeting hall of the United Nations, a Committee of our own House of Representatives was threatening that sacred freedom by its ultra-sensational investigation of the Hollywood movie industry.

We are a nation of movie-goers. The movie industry was born in our country.

American movies are the greatest and most popular in the world. In every land people laugh over the antics of Mickey Mouse, weep over the trials and tribulations of Bette Davis, thrill over the adventures of our cowboy stars, and study the American way of life from our films. Each of us may have his own faults to find with Hollywood movies. But on one thing all Americans will agree—they do not want any small body of men, however selected, to censor except upon moral grounds or dictate what should go in and what should be cut out of American movies.

I am deeply concerned by the intolerance which is so prevalent in our free country today.

If censorship begins with the movies, it will next reach the press, the radio, the stage, the writers and finally the pulpit, for that has been the pattern wherever civil liberties were once broken down.

### *WASHINGTON POST*

FILMLAND, it is scarcely to be doubted, has its quota of Communists as of reactionaries, vegetarians, prohibitionists and fanatics in other fields. The movies, which pretend to be an art form as well as an industry, naturally attract some extremists. But anyone who has seen any appreciable number of Hollywood's products must recognize that the industrial considerations are very much in the ascendancy. This is to say that movies are made for money and that, in the main, they are made, therefore, to appeal to a mass audience and to reflect mass tastes. This is why, like the radio and the mass circulation magazines, they tend to stereotyped values, romantic absurdities and happy endings.

Most movies concern themselves exclusively with entertainment. Considering their immense potentiality for the communication of ideas—evidenced by the occasional film which comes to grips with the realities and problems of life—this is a defect. But it is not a

defect which any agency of the Government can legitimately attempt to correct. For governmental interference in the making of movies would be an abridgement of press freedom. Chairman Thomas of the House Committee on Un-American Activities may pretend that his supercolossal Hollywood investigation is aimed not at interference but merely exposure. Its effect, nevertheless, is to intimidate and coerce the industry into an even more rigid acceptance of Mr. Thomas' concepts of Americanism.

Oct. 21, 1947

*HAROLD E. STASSEN*

Republican leader and candidate for  
Republican nomination for the presidency

IT is elementary that if we seek to preserve freedom by first curtailing it we largely lose before we start.

There have been two instances recently that must give us pause as we reflect upon their long term effects. The first was the attempt of the government, in connection with its so called loyalty purge, to place a new restriction upon the flow of information from the government to the press and thus to the people. These administrative regulations, couched in language about safeguarding the welfare of the country and of the administration, were of the same pattern as the press regulations in totalitarian countries and have no place in America in time of peace.

The other disturbing development was the indication arising out of the hearings of the House un-American Committee implying that there ought to be some kind of a governmental supervision of what is shown on a motion picture screen.

It is my view, that except for the existing restrictions as to libel, public morals, fraud, and treason, there must continue to be complete freedom of all media of expression in America. We must not have governmental censorship of the screen, or of books or of the press or of the radio or of the theater. The day we seek to block the expression of dissent, the voice of opposition, in America, that day we lose something fundamental to the future well-being and strength of the American people.

The greatest assurance that the American people will not be deceived by the false rainbows of Communism is the fact that our people are entitled to listen and to read what Mr. Molotov or Mr. Vishinsky or any other Communist wishes to speak or to write. We need more openness in our dealings with Russia and less secrecy rather than more of censorship.

### *NEW YORK TIMES*

THE Thomas Committee on Un-American Activities has suspended its inquiry into political opinions in Hollywood. One feels the same sense of relief that one did last August when the Brewster War Investigation Committee's subcommittee also temporarily shut up shop. In each case one had growing doubts as to a species of procedure which denied witnesses—it is hard not to say prisoners—the ordinary democratic rights. In the case of the Thomas committee witnesses were required to state their affiliation or non-affiliation

with a designated political party which exists in this and other states. Whether or not this party ought to be held legal is another and debatable question. On their refusal they were held in contempt. As far as one can see the same procedure could be applied to members of the press, radio commentators, rank-and-file members of labor unions, physicians, lawyers, scientists and country storekeepers. Most of these make no secret of their political affiliations. But has a Congressional committee a right to inquire into such affiliations in the case of legally recognized parties?

The issue thus raised will soon have to be squarely faced. We cannot penalize a person for his beliefs. We have no right even to make him tell what his beliefs are. We can penalize him only if he breaks a

law, as he certainly does if he advocates or plans the forcible overthrow of government or conspires with those who do so advocate or plan. If anybody is doing this the situation calls for Federal inquiry, indictment and punishment, with the rights of the accused protected in the prescribed manner. It calls for due process, which is not followed in today's Congressional committee rooms. The Thomas committee and others may do well to remember that respect for individual rights and constitutional processes of law is one of the marks which distinguish a democracy from a totalitarian state; and that one of the best ways to fight communism is to show such respect at all times and places—even on Capitol Hill.

Nov. 2, 1947

## Un-American Is as Un-American Does

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

*HENRY SEIDEL CANBY is the eminent American scholar and biographer, and chairman of the Editorial Board of the Saturday Review of Literature.*

**W**E are anti-Communist to the core—though not anti-Russian or anti-human nature. Hence we feared that the Congress's un-American Committee might afford us little opportunity for comment upon the current investigation. However, their procedure so resembles some aspects of the People's Courts of Nazi Germany, and equivalent investigating commissions in Soviet Russia, that even the most violent anti-Communist, if he is an American, must be appalled. It is clearly within the power of this Un-American Committee to brand any writer or artist as Communist for public inspection, upon merely hearsay evidence, with no opportunity to analyze the charge or bring in counter evidence until the smear has been made to stick. A witness, with a national reputation, though not for brain power, states that he does not like the ideas of the accused, and has heard through a friend who once got drunk with a man who looked like a fellow traveler that the said accused, or someone who looked like him, had been seen at a Communist meeting in 1937. And the Committee allows such

libelous statements to get into the headlines unchecked.

This un-Americanism of course broadens the field of attack. Any American who by word or pen has criticized the Government or contracted international relations or belonged to an organization with a different structure from orthodox capitalism can be dragged into a mud bath from which he will not escape without doubt and suspicion following him. The accuser does not have to prove anything. He merely has to assert, and the marks of the brand "Communist" will begin to show red to the popular eye on the most innocent shoulders. If our courts were conducted on such a basis, what circuses they would be for paranoiacs, haters, and crackpots!

It is only too possible that unless honest citizens protest loud and long, the pattern established by the un-American Committee will develop along lines already established in totalitarian states. From irresponsible attacks on the living, the committee will go on to irresponsible attacks on the dead, who cannot answer back, even if permitted. Our great American writers are, as it happens, unusually vulnerable to this sneaking form of attack. Here is a list of names that can certainly be made to look smudgy if Mr. Thomas

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gets his "You-don't-have-to-prove-it" methods at work upon their books. If their radicalism or subversive attitudes toward the government cannot be branded as Communism, it can be made to appear that they would have been Communists if they could!

I. A poor scholar who published an appeal to disobey any law that the citizen felt to be immoral, and charged that our Government was conducted without principle. He defended a fanatic who attacked the rights of property (in human beings) and urged a revolt of the slaves. HENRY D. THOREAU (but he would be a tough defendant).

II. A rich scholar who said that for him conscience was superior to government, and love more important than the efficiency of the Army. RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

III. Two ex-sailors who violently attacked the conduct of their country's Navy. HERMAN MELVILLE and JAMES FENIMORE COOPER. The latter scurrilously criticized (so it was charged) his country in writing published abroad, and was a close associate of a notorious fellow traveler with French radicalism—LAFAYETTE.

IV. A novelist who was for some time a member of a celebrated Communist organization. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

V. Two well-known Americans who admitted that they were deeply influenced and subsidized by a radical affiliated with various radical associations (he was their father) and must (according to the Committee's procedure) be regarded as fellow travelers. HENRY AND WILLIAM JAMES.

VI. A journalist who deserted one organization (the C.S.A.) in order to get a job under another (the U.S.A.). He publicly stated that his greatest fear was that he might become that lowest of human creatures, an American Congressman. MARK TWAIN.

VII. An internationalist whose ideas of democracy

included even the Russian definition of the term. He steadily put the welfare of man above the welfare of his country. Radicals all over the world quoted him. WALT WHITMAN.

VIII. A statesman who said that the tree of liberty must be watered every twenty years by the blood of patriots (clearly subversive) and was a prime mover in the Bill of Rights, with its stumbling block for all un-American committees, the right of free speech. THOMAS JEFFERSON. And with him may be pilloried the makers of the constitution of conservative Connecticut, which expressly reserves the right to revolution.

IX. Let us be whimsical, but not more so than our Committee. That great leader who is known to have been in the service of a foreign power. To be sure the power was not foreign when he served it, but a question of time sequence, whether in Russian films when we were allies, or in this instance, does not seem to trouble the Committee. The reference is to GEORGE WASHINGTON.

X. Add WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, who was a Socialist; HENRY GEORGE, who hit at the soft underbelly of capitalism; BELLAMY, whose *Looking Backward* went far ahead of communism in its proposed reorganization of society; and enough more to dim the glory of American literature if their reputations should be smeared and smirched.

GENTLEMEN of the Committee, do you think it would have been a better America today if these men of imagination had been officially smeared and harrowed into silence? A government that gives its critics a bad name in order to hang them—well, we have seen two such governments, one now is in the ruins of its own despotism, and we say a plague on both their houses, and a double plague on whoever tries to build another like them in the terrorism of smirch and smear.

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*The greater the importance of safeguarding the community, the more imperative is the need to preserve inviolate the constitutional rights of free speech.*

U. S. SUPREME COURT DECISION WRITTEN  
BY CHIEF JUSTICE CHARLES EVANS HUGHES

# The Saga of Doubting Thomas

I. A. L. DIAMOND

*I. A. L. DIAMOND's earlier offering in verse, Hollywood Jabberwocky, and his recent article have been extensively reprinted. He is a member of SWG.*

*The words of Parnell Thomas are  
Designed to make you think:  
"The guys who write the dramas are  
As red as red-hot mammas are,  
And even their pajamas are  
Adorned with Russian mink."  
(Their toothbrushes are pink.)*

*"A certain former war-ally  
Has made a challenge blunt,  
So on the chamber floor'll I  
Demand we keep a moral eye  
On every movie Lorelei  
Who hides behind a front."  
(I'd love to join the hunt!)*

*"We're probing up a canker in  
The movies' First-of-May boys;  
The writers all are hankerin'  
To write a crooked banker in,  
While certain stars look blander in  
The roles of rich young playboys."  
(Eschew that broad, broad 'a', boys!)*

*"That handsome flying-sailor made  
A film that shall be nameless.  
Were just the girl whom Taylor made,  
Instead of Red, a paler maid,  
A pure escapist frail or maid,  
His conduct would be blameless."  
(So when in doubt, go dameless!)*

*Those subtle Reds outwit us in  
Each line and every scene;  
Despite the fact that it is in  
The ken of every citizen  
When movie folk commit a sin  
Both on and off the screen."  
(We'll blast their pix unseen!)*

*"Our object is to fasten back  
The ears of our detractors.  
We will not stand for sassin' back  
From glamor girls who mass in back;  
We kept their legal brass in back,  
And upstaged all the actors."  
(While up our creek, they lacked oars.)*

*"Though charges indiscriminate  
Invariably crop up,  
If someone draws the women, it  
Behooves us to get him in it;  
He makes a splash, we swim in it!  
He dribbles out, we mop up!  
(Or else, we just close shop up.)*

*"McNutt and Crum and Eric in  
Implying that we can err,  
Have proved themselves generic kin*

*To forces un-American  
Whose films are atmospheric in  
A moody Russian manner."  
(—, white and blue, our banner.)*

*"We smear 'em with aplomb, and turn  
Invective loose at their heads:  
They'd steal the atom-bomb and turn  
It over to the Comintern!  
We'll frighten some, and some intern,  
And garner lots of scare-heads."  
(To Hearst we bow our bare heads.)*

*"The facts, if you assess 'em'll  
Invalidate our views, since  
The Reds are just a decimal,  
In fact, infinitesimal,  
But someone, if you press him'll  
Assert they're quite a nuisance."  
(While Pegler adds his two cents.)*

*"A few, with manners curt, defy  
Our right to make 'em answer;  
And since you have a furtive eye  
I hope you won't be hurt if I  
Should ask you, please, to certify  
You're not a Robeson fan, sir."  
(The singer, or the man, sir?)*

*"Among the scribes, there's some as are  
For Triple-A it's plain;  
A literary commissar  
I can't distinguish from a czar,  
But all their plans, I promise are  
Developing in vain."  
(We've set a mark on Cain.)*

*"The guy who authored Margie is  
Accused of you-know what?  
With solemn mien, we'll charge he is  
A menace while at large he is,  
And like Madame LaFarge he is  
A dirty sans-culotte,"  
(In every film, a plot!)*

*"We're oh so sweet and affable  
To those who back our aim;  
Our antics may be laughable  
But if they're photographable  
We'll pass on our behalf a bill  
Perpetuating same."  
(For country, and for fame!)*

*"The phrase 'To share and share alike',  
It's memory is now stark;  
All liberals we'll scare alike,  
We'll say the Reds and they're alike,  
Till all their films are sterile-like,  
And each is laid in Graustark."  
(And every movie-house dark?)*



# Sorcerer's Apprentice

SALKA VIERTEL

SALKA VIERTEL, a member of SWG, is the famous actress and writer. As an actress, in association with Max Reinhardt, she produced and starred in Ibsen on the European stage. In Hollywood she has written many well-known screen plays.

WHEN the average American citizen opens his newspaper in the morning and his children peek over his shoulder—I assume that the average American citizen is a gentle creature and loves his children to peer over his shoulder—he must be worried.

The casualty list of these postwar victims is staggering. The lurid love letters of two unfortunate young people accused of murder give the necessary pornographic flavor to all this. But they would not pass the Breen office. Still, anything goes as long as it is news, true or distorted, false or exaggerated. The newspaper brings it into every home, and an inadequate libel law permits attacks on decent people as long as the attacks promise the same sensationalism as the murders.

Why, then, are the films censored? The writers are watched severely by such efficient and brilliant detectives as M.P.A.'s own Lela, who spotted at once the subversiveness of the line "Share and share alike." The good boys and girls of the Motion Picture Alliance run immediately to their beloved committee and tell-tale and smear and report their more talented and responsible colleagues to the un-Americans.

How familiar this all sounds, how well remembered! Years ago, at the Actors Guild meeting in Germany, I heard the same views expressed against the progressive elements of the guild. This was the pattern followed in all German trade unions until the day dawned when they were abolished, when they ceased to exist.

The first ones to be denounced and verboten as "Kulturbolsheviks" were Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Remarque, James Joyce, Picasso, Sigmund Freud and many others, some of whom have since contributed their great gifts to the cultural life of the countries which gave them refuge.

The showing of Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* was an historic incident. Stink-bombs

were thrown on the crowds who attended the performances. Charlie Chaplin was the next to be verboten.

As in the tone poem *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, uncontrollable forces were released; and no sorcerer has been able to banish them.

It started with the Composers League protesting a Cantata for Choir by Hanns Eisler (it seems that it always starts with Hanns Eisler) to the words of an old German poem of the sixteenth century. This first attempt at censoring a work of art was not successful; but a step forward in the "right" direction was achieved when the film *Kuhle Wampe* (*Empty Belly*), written by Bert Brecht was verboten. It dealt with the problems of the postwar depression, and Naziism insisted that the German standard of living be presented not truthfully, but with more glamour. One does not show the world and the German people that something is rotten in the state of Germany.

I have before me a leaflet now being circulated in the American zone by the underground Nazi movement. It urges Germans not to cooperate with the occupation forces, to sabotage them, and to exterminate the "Jews, Niggers, the Polish street robbers and the left wing leaders."

This leaflet is very eloquent. Are we going to permit the reactionary forces who are blind to the still-existing menace of fascism and are instead busily engaged in red-baiting and witch-hunting to ruin the victory of our soldiers and to mock the sacrifice of our dead? Are we going to let these people tell us what to write?

We are handicapped enough as it is. Films like *Broken Blossoms*, *Hallelujah*, *The Crowd*, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Ruggles of Red Gap* cannot be made today, when *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Pride of the Marines* are called subversive. Only *Crossfire* and *Gentlemen's Agreement* prove that there are still men with courage and sense in the industry. These pictures go even a step beyond the one in which Captain

Dreyfus' affliction was cautiously monogrammed by the inserted letter "J."

**D**EMOCRACY is a precious thing. So is freedom. But in wartime both are the first casualties. Still, I have learned a wonderful thing about the United States—the people do their own thinking. Neither yellow journalism nor hysterical gossip columnists will make their minds up for them. It is little short of banal to speak of the importance of motion pictures in the cultural life of the nations of the world, and therefore it seems contradictory to strive for the economic and cultural advancement of screen writers and to ignore the fact that political issues have a profound relation to their problems.

Writing involves thinking, even though some producers have maintained that they do the thinking and tell the writers how and what to write, to say nothing of the directors and actors. Some of them are so keenly aware of their cultural and patriotic responsibility that they spot immediately the implications in the "pinch-penny" line in *None But The Lonely Heart* (perhaps a reference to pennies offended the great minds accustomed to big deals in terms of dollars). And I remember a director who objected to the line "All men are created equal."

The average citizen must be alarmed. He must

be aware of the danger. He must help to keep the screen free. The German example is no reason for defeatism. The Bill of Rights is a hundred and seventy years old; the diluted Weimar edition was only twelve years old and could not stand the test. But those who attack the Bill of Rights must be defeated in their unholy attempt. We have to counter-attack the stupidity and the evil and the forces of darkness.

Not having studied Marxism so thoroughly and profoundly as Mr. Menjou or the self-styled "writer of sorts" Mrs. Lela Rogers, and being free from political affiliations, I still cannot forget that twenty million Russians died in the fight against fascism, that to the Soviet occupation of Poland in 1939 I owe the life of my mother, and that the Nazis murdered my brother. These are my politics: they are simple enough, and I am not afraid to state them. And after having lived through two world wars and seen the destruction of my home and native land and mourned my dear ones, I dare to express the hope that the screen shall remain free of the censorship of moronic haters. The average citizen may read his morning paper and write his Congressman how many other problems he has to face, more important and more vital than detecting communism in Hollywood films. The screen should remain free, and praised be those writers, actors, directors and producers who try to bring about peace on earth and good will to men—all men.

## A Message From England

This resolution was adopted by the membership at the annual general meeting of the British Screenwriters' Association in London November 14:

*That the Screenwriters' Association, being a non-political body, deplores the proceedings of the Commission for the Investigation of un-American Activities and expresses its sympathy and support for the Hollywood Screen Writers' Guild and for those members of the Guild who, irrespective of their political views, have been impugned by this commission.*

In another message from the British screenwriters' organization, the suggestion of sanctuary in England was suggested to "the eminent and liberal-minded writers who have been attacked by this Commission." Over the signature of Guy Morgan, secretary, the Association urged SWG to suggest all practical steps that can be taken by the British writers to help their American colleagues.

In reply the Executive Board of SWG sent the following cable:

*Deep gratitude for the warm sentiments and official welcome extended liberal-minded writers attacked by un-American Activities Committee. We are also determined to oppose the committee's attempted blacklist. Will fight with you to keep the screen free throughout the world.*



# Reddened Any Good Pictures Lately?

ROLAND KIBBEE

ROLAND KIBBEE, whose previous contributions to *The Screen Writer* have been widely quoted, is a member of the SWG.

Recently, in San Francisco, a city which I am told is controlled by Harry Bridges, I purchased a copy of the *Examiner*, secreted it under my loafer jacket, and sauntered casually into my hotel, for all the world like a good union man carrying nothing more than the latest orders from Moscow.

A hasty perusal of its content (it is difficult to read a Hearst paper leisurely) revealed it to be a passionate plea for Federal censorship of films prompted by the revelations at the House Un-American Activities Committee Hearings in Washington.

That brought back to me all that I had read and heard of Hollywood since the anti-Red Crusade. The stories about non-Communists finding it difficult to obtain employment in the studios. The one in *The Hollywood Reporter* about the script that had to be rewritten for an exacting deadline and was handed over to swift, facile Party writers. The harrowing accounts of the necessity of Party and Kremlin approval of scenarios . . . and soul-stirring tales of the Resistance. Stars who stead-

fastly refused to mouth Red-tainted dialogue—monumentally heroic self-restraint when one considers the dialogue they *do* mouth. I realized that living and working in Hollywood could never give one the objective picture the rest of the world got from reading about it. It was high time that an accredited correspondent of the stamp of a W. L. White or Eugene Lyons came to Hollywood and wrote a book about the town in the manner of their delineations of the Soviet Union. Not the usual hogwash about mad writers, illiterate producers and wild parties, but a comprehensive depiction of what appears to be, from what I gather in the newspapers, the *first Soviet community within the continental limits of the United States*.

In an effort to inspire such a work, I append below a tantalizing sample of how the opening chapter might read. Mind you, this is just a sample, and purely speculative, based upon what I have read in the newspapers, and, as I said before, all I know is what I read in the papers—or did somebody else say that?

## CHAPTER ONE

**H**OLLYWOOD! Magic name. Hollywood! It was almost as though I could hear the word. Hollywood! Could it be at last? Hollywood! After all these years, all those passport snarls. Hollywood! Hollywood! Was I really there?

"You're damned right you're there," snapped the conductor. "What the Hell do you think I been yellin' Hollywood for?"

So I *had* been hearing it.

"Are you gettin' off or ain't you?" snarled the conductor, making a threatening motion toward the bell-cord.

I got off, reflecting that my first contact with a member of the working class had already revealed the coarse, overbearing attitude that comes with Socialism. Nor had his profanity been lost upon me. I fully expected such outbursts, having surmised from Mr. Leo McCarey's testimony at the Washington hearings that Hollywood was a Godless country—its many churches being merely a "set" to mislead the unwary traveler. I had heard they were really drive-ins where one could obtain an exotic sandwich known as a Stalinburger, served by pretty slave-girls who had been captured in border skirmishes in the undeclared war with Texas. Just how Hollywood comes to border Texas makes for an interesting expo-

sition of the New Imperialism, and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Needless to say, none of the functionaries whom I had been assured would meet me were on hand. It was later explained, with diplomatic regret, that they were "in Washington." This is the standard evasion among Hollywood autocrats. Most of them are writers, a professional group notorious for their duplicity and cunning in avoiding work, and I soon learned that golf courses and race-tracks were swarming with writers while their secretaries were blandly assuring producers that they were "in Washington."

I was greeted instead by a minor official of the Metro Collective who bore the title of Junior Writer. He

was a short, stocky fellow, lugubrious but by no means taciturn, who answered all of my questions freely except those dealing with his ideas for screen stories. Whenever I got onto this subject a look of fear would shadow his already gloomy countenance, and his beady little eyes would gleam with quick suspicion. He was like a man who held something dear in constant dread it would be stolen from him. He introduced himself as Comrade X, and when I looked askance, he hastened to assure me that he didn't mind the name at all, that Junior Writers were accustomed to anonymity. Throughout my stay Comrade X, who acted as guide and interpreter, babbled incessantly of "credits," the system of remuneration employed in the Hollywood society in lieu of money.

As soon as we had made ourselves known to each other, Comrade X led me to his convertible Buick, a car which the State supplies to all Hollywood writers, and we drove off into the stream of traffic that gluts Hollywood Boulevard as late as nine p.m. It is perhaps worth noting one small but revealing incident here. Strolling to Comrade X's Buick, we passed the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street. As we rounded the corner I glanced back and noticed two sinister-looking men detaching themselves from the crowd at the curb awaiting the arrival of the P.E. (People's Electric) trolley. The men fell into step behind us, and were to follow me for the duration of my sojourn in Hollywood. Their thin disguise of lavender blouses, rouged cheeks and peroxidized hair did not fool me for a moment. I knew them instantly for what they were—members of the dread Secret Police.

**A**S Comrade X urged the big car perilously through traffic—driving in Hollywood sharply reminds one that the automobile has but recently come to this land—he told me that the Foreign Office (it sounded like "Morris Office" the way he said it) had arranged a visit to Party Headquarters at the RKO Collective as the first item on my itinerary. I was not surprised to learn that the RKO studios has been selected as the base of operations by the Bolsheviks. I recalled that its production executive, Doré Schary, had rocked the nation with his revolutionary proclamation to the Thomas Committee that he would not fire an accused man until proven guilty.

En route we passed Ciro's (it was a rather circuitous route, Comrade X unaccountably seeming as anxious as I to elude our pursuers) a large quasi-public night club to which the local citizenry are admitted presumably on the basis of their credits, money being frowned upon. It is frequented mostly by glamorous young

starlets, all of whom are members of the Young Communist League, and it is in this den of iniquity that they lure unsuspecting writers, limp-brained and unresisting under the influence of orange juice (the national drink and the opiate of the people) into the ranks of the Party. I asked X if he had ever been to Ciro's, and he said no and neither had any other Junior Writer that he ever heard of.

We finally screeched to a stop in front of RKO, pursued by three traffic officers who sprang from their motorcycles and bore down on us angrily before we were able to alight from the car. I felt a quick pang of fear, but X calmly opened his wallet and waved a Screen Writers Guild membership card at the cops. They withdrew instantly, bowing, scraping and stammering apologies, and remounting their motorcycles, rode off red-faced. I should point out here that the Screen Writers Guild, while representing a very small section of the population, is in complete control of the Hollywood Government. Their members and functionaries live in the best homes, drive the finest automobiles, eat at the costliest restaurants, and hold the rest of the community in abject terror and virtual slavery. The organization, like so many others in the Hollywood bureaucracy, is known only by its initials—SWG—and they are never mentioned except in whispered tones of reverence and awe.

As we entered the studio, I noticed that Comrade X spat upon the flag that draped the door, a charming folk custom that Hollywoodians observe whenever entering or leaving public buildings. On the way over, X had told me a little about these great collective studios in which all workers share equally in the profits, but his driving was so erratic that my hastily scrawled notes are quite illegible. Nor shall I be able to give the reader a first-hand account of the workings of the studio, for I was never able to penetrate the Iron Curtain that shrouds the sound stages. My oft-repeated requests to see a picture in the making were all politely but firmly turned down. Nobody is permitted on these sets except the people actually working on the film and, of course, writers. There are those in Hollywood who will tell you, at the privacy of a table in the Collective Farmers Market or other public gathering place, that what really goes on in the sound stages are plans for world conquest, hence the secrecy.

So it was that Comrade X led me hastily past the stages to an ornate, luxuriously furnished building, the last word in architectural splendor, which housed the screen writers and, ipso facto, Party Headquarters. It was called the James M. Cain Building in honor of the man who proposed the first Seven-Year Plan. Inside we passed numerous offices inhabited by writers



who were sleeping, playing gin rummy, molesting their secretaries (the most beautiful girls in Hollywood are reserved as writers' secretaries), or otherwise enjoying the fruits of their own totalitarian system.

We arrived at last in an ante-room so elegant, presided over by a secretary so exquisite, that I guessed it to be the seat of operations of one of the biggest of the writers. A moment later, X verified my suspicions by solemnly assuring me that I was about to be formally presented to one of the highest-ranking officers in filmdom—an SWG Studio Chairman. There are only eight of them in Hollywood, and their power is staggering.

MY work has led me into the presence of kings, dictators, sultans and khedives, and in every case I have been able to say to myself: "I am an American and to Hell with them." But I must confess to a siege of hysterical trembling as I confronted the SWG Studio Chairman in his sanctum. The room itself was not one to put the wary guest at his ease. It was furnished throughout in execrable but lavish taste, the pieces having been appropriated from the homes of liquidated producers. Generally, the interior was of the Norman period, here and there reflecting the influence of the earlier Saracen rulers of the island. The walls were lined with marble, rush matting covered the floor, and the ceiling was panelled and frescoed after the Italian manner of the 15th Century. It would have taken a W. & J. Sloane man weeks to catalogue the furnishings, but I can recall, without half-trying, a German oak cupboard with Gothic tracery, a Venetian chair of carved walnut upholstered in velvet, a French ebony cabinet with marquetry of tortoise shell and brass, a *Bureau du Roi* adorned with mouldings, statuettes, vases and gilt bronze plaques (both of the latter pieces gifts of the Association of French Screen Writers), a barrel-shaped window-seat worked with an elaborate pattern of floral scrolls, heraldry, beasts and birds, a bedstead of carved walnut with inlaid frieze, and an Early American Underwood No. 5 typewriter.

Dominating the room from the wall behind the Studio Chairman's desk (actually a Louis XV writing table in sycamore with inlay of plaques of Sèvres porcelain), were the inevitable portraits of Gordon Kahn and Ring Lardner, Jr. A word about each of these men might not be amiss here, for they are indeed powers in the community. Kahn is a large, bearish fellow, judging from his picture—I never met him, he, of course, being "in Washington" (*sic*)—and the first thing that catches the eye is his monocle, relic of his exile to J. Arthur Rank during the counter-Revolu-

tion at Warner Brothers. He is Editor of *The Screen Writer*, official mouthpiece of the SWG in which one has lately read such vitriolic attacks on our form of government. Kahn is noted chiefly for his ability to bully screen writers into contributing pieces to *The Screen Writer*, a feat which he accomplishes by whining and pleading, when both he and the writer know full well that failure to comply means ostracism and worse. He is also consummately skillful at doling out the Moscow gold which pays for *Screen Writer* articles, no investigation having ever succeeded in turning up a penny of it, and the authors themselves never coming into direct contact with it. Lardner is something else again—enjoying no official title, and, naturally, when one seeks an interview, always "in Washington,"—but typical of those powers behind the throne that one finds in the Hollywood oligarchy. Perhaps the story of how he came by his given name reveals more than anything else the influence which this man of mystery wields in Hollywood. Here is the way it was told to me by a source I am not at liberty to reveal:

AS you have doubtless heard, film scripts are approved by the Kremlin in Moscow before being brought to the screen; however this is not true of all scripts. Stalin and Molotov, because of the press of affairs, and in spite of their acute interest in the Hollywood product, find time only to study and certify the big pictures. But Hollywood produces many low-budget or "B" pictures, and in order to cut what Comrade X referred to as "white tape," the Russians permit the local Hollywood authorities to okay the lesser films (not to be confused with Sol Lesser Productions). I said before that Lardner had no official title, but this is not precisely true. Actually he holds the innocuous-sounding but highly influential office of Commissar of Light Entertainment. In short, it is Lardner who gives the nod to B pictures, and he is, in consequence, a very busy—and presumably bored—man. As a result of the constant necessity of telephoning Lardner anent the socially significant factor in this or that scene or bit of dialogue, a by-word sprang up in Hollywood comparable to the "Clear it with Sidney" shibboleth in the last American presidential election. Born Ambrose Bartholomew Lardner, one always found one's self referring to him with the utmost brevity in sentences like: "Better ring Lardner on that," or "I dunno, you'll have to ring Lardner," or just, "Ring Lardner." Hence the nickname, Ring Lardner. Incidentally, there is a rumor now rife in Hollywood that the failure of the Thomas-Rankin Committee to unearth any Communist propaganda

in films has rendered Lardner *persona non grata* with the Russians and that his liquidation from the Commissariat of Light Entertainment is only a matter of time.

Getting back to the Studio Chairman in whose office I now found myself, he was, if possible, even more impressive than the decor, and just as rococo. As a matter of fact, his name was Joe Rococo. He greeted me with the traditional salute of the scenarist, both feet raised and planted firmly, heels down, on the desk. This gave me an opportunity to note his attire. He was wearing the resplendent full-dress uniform of the high-ranking SW, or Screen Writer; a mauve Tyrolean hat of fuzzy felt from which protruded a jaunty crimson feather, a London Shop casual jacket of canary flannel sans lapels and with silver buttons. Carelessly knotted about his throat was a silken paisley muffler in chartreuse and magenta, while underneath this could be seen evidence of a black and white striped polo shirt. His multi-pleated doe-skin slacks, with the hammer and sickle emblem stitched in sampler motif on the seat, were supported by a red, white and blue belt of glossy taffeta from which there appended and disappeared into his horizontal pockets a platinum key-chain wrought in the letters of his name, each one a full two inches in size. Encasing the feet reposed on the desk before me was a pair of multi-colored hand-knit socks of an unimaginable thickness, done in a floral pattern but yet with an eye for the lure of geometric twists and turns, and these in turn were stuffed into open-toe beige lizard sandals which were mounted on six-inch wedgies. At his breast gleamed the coveted Order of John Howard Lawson.

"Well," was Rococo's opening gambit, "what the hell are you staring at?"

I knew at once that here was a man I could get along with, a man who spoke in plain American, and in no time at all he and Comrade X and myself were indulging the inescapable round of orange juice toasts to Joseph Stalin, Louis B. Mayer, Adrian Scott and Lester Cole. When we had finally settled down to business and Rococo asked what he might do for me, I explained that I desired only to sit in his office and watch the routine exactly as it would take place if I were not present. To my surprise, he voiced no objection to this—and as I sat in the corner on an early 18th century English hoopback chair veneered in rich mahogany and finely carved, I soon discovered why he had been so reasonable. It was quite apparent that none of the secret Party machinations were carried on in that office. All that transpired was the humdrum sort of thing that I had been led to expect from newspaper reports back in the States. Rococo busied himself turning down applications for Party

membership from wretched writers who, as non-members, were unable to obtain employment; cursing the Soviet postal system which had delayed the return of several scripts that had been sent abroad for approval and were now holding up production (I was surprised to discover that some criticism of the system was still tolerated); intimidating actors who were refusing to read revolutionary dialog; putting off frantic producers who were lobbying for Party writers to rewrite their screenplays—all the dull, bone-dry activities that characterize a Hollywood writer's office during a normally busy week-day morning.

THERE were two incidents which were perhaps a trifle out of the ordinary. At one point the telephone rang, and it turned out to be a long-distance call from a writer actually in Washington who wanted to know what the Party Line was in regard to answering Congressman Thomas' \$64 question. "Just take the \$32 and come home," ordered Rococo, banging down the receiver. It was clear that the Washington Hearings were getting on his nerves, for a moment later a hapless writer wandered in and wanted to know if Rococo couldn't arrange to have him summoned to Washington since all of his friends were there. Rococo dismissed the writer summarily and, turning to me, growled: "That lad is suffering from sub-poenas envy." Comrade X leaned over and, in a whisper, explained to me that Rococo had written a number of psychiatric films and was counted rather an expert in these matters.

The other occurrence which excited my interest was somewhat grimmer. I had been increasingly aware of groans and occasional piercing screams which seemed to come from behind a barred door that led to an adjoining office. Presently this door opened—I caught a glimpse of red-hot irons, multi-thonged whips, and mean-looking truncheons—then the door was quickly closed by the writer who entered. He was stripped to the waist and perspiring freely. He saluted Rococo wearily.

"That takes care of Macaulay and Niblo," he reported. "As you ordered, Comrade, we've given them everything we could find in those De Mille pictures."

"That ought to be plenty," mused Rococo, a wistful gleam lighting his roguish eyes.

"What about Moffitt and Ryskind?" inquired the aide.

Rococo scanned a list from the SWG Grievance Committee which cited insolvent motion picture companies. Then, making a decision which seemed difficult



even for him, made a selection and said: "Send them to Feckless Films."

I can swear that I saw the aide blanch. "Feckless Films, sir?" he stammered.

"Feckless Films," repeated Rococo with finality.

"Very well, Comrade Studio Chairman," returned the aide, but in his voice was the echo of horror, and as he retraced his steps to the room beyond one could perceive in his gait the faltering rhythm of a man who hated his job.

The incident was soon forgotten, however, for with a sudden return of his original gaiety, Rococo glanced at his watch, announced that it was 11:15 and, therefore, time for writers lunch, a festival which begins daily at that hour and runs on until 3:30 in the afternoon. Of lunch, which we ate in the studio's cooperative commissary, there is little to report save that the food, while simple, is high-priced and poorly prepared. I did overhear fragments of a story conference during the meal. A writer was berating a cringing producer in regard to a story idea which the producer had just outlined.

"Stinks," said the writer.

"I was just thinking out loud," murmured the producer, apologetically.

"Won't draw flies at the box-office," the writer

went on. "When people go to the movies today they expect propaganda. Make that banker of yours a heel and the girl a union organizer, and you've got something."

"Great!" exclaimed the producer, regarding the writer with frank idolatry. "Maybe we could get Ginger Rogers to play the part." He turned to his assistant who hovered nearby. "Get her mother on the phone right away," he barked. . . .

THUS, at lunch, ended my first working day in a Hollywood film studio. In the next chapter I shall tell of my visit, that evening, to the justly-famous Ballet at the Palladium, and of a trip the following morning to the Mulholland Hydro-Electric Project. Chapter two also contains some assorted revelations which I obtained from an unspeakable source while getting a hair-cut at Rothschild's, an establishment operated by a scion of the great banking firm who lost everything in the Revolution and is now reduced to barbering. . . . I was already beginning to understand the Red Hollywoodians, and to despair of any rapport ever being achieved between them and the civilized world despite their pleas that they seek only peace and to be left alone to make pictures.

## Censorship Through Fear

WILLIAM WYLER

*WILLIAM WYLER is the distinguished motion picture director whose recent picture Best Years of Our Lives, swept the Academy Award field. His previous article in this magazine, No Magic Wand, has been translated and published in eleven European and Latin-American nations.*

THE demand for Federal censorship and "house-cleaning" of the film industry is predicated on the assumption that Hollywood is dominated by Communists. The Hearst press claims: "So, of course, there has been a continuous and persistent production of COMMUNISTIC FILMS."

Of course this is one of the grossest misstatements of fact ever perpetrated by newspapers of large circulation.

It would not have been possible to make this statement had it not been for the groundwork of the Motion Picture Alliance and the House Committee on un-American Activities. Those groups have been

making this unsubstantiated claim for so many months that by now the mere repetition in print of the words "Communistic Films" causes people to believe there are such films.

Responsible opinion in the industry and in such sections of the press as the New York Times and Herald Tribune knows that such a claim is the sheerest nonsense. If there were any pictures which even attempted to undermine the American way of life, it would be impossible to keep them a secret.

So, of course, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO NEED for Federal Censorship.

The demand for it, as well as Mr. Thomas' demand

that the industry clean house, is designed to keep all liberal and progressive persons off the Hollywood payrolls, and to make sure that the films produced conform to Mr. Thomas' and Mr. Hearst's peculiar and arbitrary standards of entertainment and Americanism.

I use the word "peculiar" advisedly. To me, persons who attempt to destroy the basic safeguards of American freedom guaranteed by the first amendment to the Constitution, in the name of preserving that freedom, have a peculiar view of Americanism, to say the least.

But of more direct concern to me than the future danger of censorship, is the present danger of self-censorship through fear.

An incipient form of blacklist already exists. Some producers would just as soon "play it safe" and not hire certain writers with a known progressive background. "Why look for trouble? Why hire someone who might be subpoenaed by the Thomas Committee?"

Also, some producers are starting to eliminate

"doubtful" stories, scenes and lines. By "doubtful" they mean controversial. So prevalent has the fear become, that these producers are beginning to doubt their own patriotism, or their ability to determine what is patriotic.

My answer is that by playing safe, these short-sighted producers are accepting the standards of the Thomas Committee, and are merely inviting further trouble. The men in and out of public office who have attacked our industry would like nothing better than to have the Producers' Association adopt a hush-hush policy.

Unless these two trends are sharply reversed, this self-censorship will destroy our free screen, result in financially unsuccessful pictures, which in turn will affect the livelihood of every man and woman who works in the studios.

As far as I know, there has never been any way to preserve liberty and individual rights except by openly attacking any attempt to curtail them.

## Freedom of the Screen

EMMET LAVERY

*EMMET LAVERY, retiring president of the Screen Writers Guild, writes alternately for stage and screen. He testified at Washington before the House Committee on un-American Activities as the official spokesman for the Guild. Currently he is preparing for production in New York a play about Congress entitled The Gentleman From Athens.*

**W**HEN the kleig lights were burning brightest during the recent hearings in Washington, two elderly ladies slipped into the caucus room of the old House Office Building and observed with some excitement the proceedings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

"Where," whispered one to the other, "are the prisoners?"

An obliging Congressman, sitting in front of them, leaned over and pointed to the boys from the wire services who occupied a dais near Congressman J. Parnell Thomas.

"There are the prisoners," murmured the Congressman. "They have to sit here every day and listen to

every word of this and they can't get out until it's all over."

Funny? Yes, but sad too in a way, for the dear old ladies had some logic behind their question. After all, with all the rumpus going on, they naturally took it for granted that somebody was guilty of something. So, for that matter, did large sections of the American public. Not understanding the difference between a trial at law and an inquiry before Congress, they oversimplified the question at issue. And, without a single film being shown to anyone on the Committee, large sections of the public came to a series of amazing and erroneous conclusions, shaping up about as follows: (1) the screen is in danger of being taken over by the



Communists; (2) the Communists dominate the industry and the Screen Writers Guild; (3) the only choice open to Americans today is between the extreme represented by Congressman J. Parnell Thomas and the extreme represented by the screen writers who declined to testify and who were cited for contempt of Congress.

The newspapers, on the whole, did not make these mistakes but the general public did and the further away you got from Washington, the more widespread were these convictions. Very few people seemed to be aware that the only major threat to the screen today is the threat of government interference, of federal censorship.

Congressman Thomas, of course, took good care that this issue never got the airing it deserved. Avoiding all discussion of the content of films, he concentrated instead on the private political lives of most of the "hostile" witnesses called before him. And it is interesting to note that, in the case of the screen writers cited for contempt, the so-called "dossiers" do not on the whole concern themselves very much with the activities of these writers as screen writers. Here, as with the content of films, the Committee chose to do a run around end. It merely assumed the truth of its major allegations and went on from there.

It so happens that I personally do not agree with the strategy of the screen writers who were cited for contempt. As a lawyer I have some questions in my mind about the extent to which a Congressional committee can pry into the private political life of a citizen who has been accused of no crime. But as a lawyer I also have some questions in my mind about the general value of contempt proceedings in a case like this and about the general possibilities for success. But my personal preferences do not, I hope, blind me to the reality of the situation we are currently discussing.

In my own case I preferred to waive my constitutional rights and speak out frankly on behalf of the Guild which I have represented as president for three terms. And I still think it would have been better if other members of the Guild had done likewise—or had promptly gone outside to the press and volunteered to the press the information which they did not believe that the Committee had the right to ask as a Committee. I thought then and I still think that it was capricious and unfortunate for these members of the Guild to refuse to answer questions about membership in the Guild and inevitably to group the response to these questions with the response to the questions about membership in the Communist Party.

But in the field of personal and civil liberties, I recognize that all of us in this Guild and in this country have a purely personal right and responsibility to

answer or not to answer, under circumstances like these, according to our own conscience and according to the best advice of counsel available. And I make the point at this length only to emphasize that we should not let our naturally varying opinions on the personal problems confuse or obscure our thinking on the community problems which faces us—freedom of the screen.

How *shall* we protect this freedom? My own feeling is that there are points past which you can not legislate for freedom. Freedom is something you have to create as you go along and keep on creating. It comes from within the individual and it goes out from the individual to his government and to the world. Not the other way around.

I feel, therefore, that the best way to protect the freedom of the screen, to answer the implicit threat of the House Committee on un-American Activities, is for the industry to make better films than ever before—more courageous, more imaginative, more deeply illuminative of the times in which we live.

True, we are right to ask for an end to the Thomas Committee as currently constituted, for the methods used have not achieved the objectives Congress had in mind. We are right to ask for revision of procedures, which would protect both the right of inquiry in Congress and the right of personal security in the individual witness before a Congressional committee. But these items, desirable though they are, merely touch the surface of the problem.

Now, as during my testimony before Congress, I feel that we sometimes miss the basic implication of the medium we are using. Everybody talks about defending pictures, very few of us think about the kind of pictures the world needs. Very few of us think of films as the one great universal medium of communication which transcends all barriers of race and language.

Consequently, I would like to go back to a bit of my own testimony which is gathering dust now in some stenographer's office in Washington. It isn't enough to ask Congress to leave films alone. We must ask Congress to do something to encourage the widest possible development of the American screen as a means of establishing better understanding among nations.

I propose, therefore, what I proposed to Congress. I propose that an International Film Festival be held annually in Washington under the auspices of the Congress of the United States and the Library of Congress and that Congress be asked for the necessary funds for the Library to administer such a festival.

I propose that the finest film work of every country in the world be solicited for such a festival and that the exhibit be open to every type of film, professional

and non-professional, entertainment and documentary.

I propose a festival without prizes, without the bitter national rivalries that have sometimes attended prize-giving festivals in other countries. I propose a festival dedicated to the true art of the film and to the spirit of peace among human beings everywhere.

Let all the final exhibits share honors equally. Let the only honor to be awarded be the honor of being chosen, in the particular group or country, for final showing in this international gallery.

Is this too much to hope for? If films are the speech of people the world over, let's begin to talk.

## The Cost of Silence

HOWARD KOCH

*HOWARD KOCH, playwright and author of many outstanding pictures, is a member of SWG and one of the nineteen "unfriendly" witnesses subpoenaed by the Thomas Un-American Activities Committee. His contribution to this section of the Screen Writer is based on earlier addresses made by him.*

THERE are times when a man has to choose between two desirable ends—the good he can serve by speech or the good he can serve by silence. The ten who were cited for contempt of Congress by the un-American Activities Committee were deeply convinced that by their silence, by their refusal to answer questions which the Constitution specifically states are improperly asked, they could best defend what they most cherish—the right of an American citizen to follow his own conscience in matters of political or religious belief.

The sudden awakening of a great segment of our population to a danger that was creeping up on them, concealed in the cloak of an official body that professed it was protecting our civil liberties while in fact it was denying the most basic right of all—this awakening is proof that these ten men have not made the point in vain.

But we must be frank. The point was not made without a cost. It meant we could not defend ourselves or the work we did or the organizations we belong to or the things we believed in. Yes, the cost of silence came high, but not too high if now we can speak out, if now we can make you understand what happened to us. Because if you do, you will see to it that it doesn't happen again.

Most of us are writers, but few of us could have imagined the nightmarish fantasy in which we found ourselves. We were supposed to have been called as witnesses, but we weren't in Washington a day before

we knew we were not witnesses. We were defendants. Our telephone wires were tapped. Our most casual meetings were watched. If we wanted to consult with one of our lawyers, we had to go outside of the hotel and do our talking in the street. We began to feel like characters in an E. Phillips Oppenheim spy story. Some of us got so immersed in our roles, that now when we ask for a cigarette, we lower our voices. Inside of that innocent wrapping might be an atom bomb secret.

Now follow us to the hearing room. On our way we passed the Capitol. There was no doubt we were in the United States of America. Yet when we passed through the door into the Committee Room, we felt we had walked through Alice's Looking Glass and we stood in fairyland . . . and the Capitol of the United States was only two blocks away.

What fell upon our astonished ears in that room? Bland assertions treated as evidence that by no standard of a court of law *is* evidence. Accusations against us of a crime that is *not* a crime. And the committee itself making amiable suggestions to their friendly witnesses as to how we should be punished—blacklisted, our jobs taken away. And we thought of the Mad Queen in Alice in Wonderland who kept saying, "Off with their heads!" and when Alice asked why, the Queen replied, "Because I say so." And we thought, too of the song in Gilbert and Sullivan, *Let the Punishment Fit the Crime*. Only in our case the crime was obviously being invented to fit the punishment. Fantasy?



Yes. But day after day we had to listen to these incredible things in silence and we had to watch the press print them and much of the public absorb them as though they were facts—and even our silence interpreted as a guilty admission of some nameless crime.

**N**OW this investigation was supposed to be about films made in Hollywood that contained un-American or subversive ideas. In some thousand pages of friendly testimony what pictures were proved to contain such ideas? Not a single one.

Of course they brought out *Mission To Moscow* and *Song of Russia*, dusting them off in the hope that red paint would show through. But it was rather difficult to prove that Mr. Warner and Mr. Mayer were communists, although I understand you can buy party membership cards on almost any Washington street corner at a dollar a dozen. Anyway, it was obvious that pictures made with the purpose of presenting an allied country with some understanding of its action and problems could hardly be unpatriotic, particularly when our military fortunes at that critical time hung largely on the strength and morale of the Soviet Union. (I realize, of course, it is somewhat unfashionable today to recall the last war when so much zeal is going into the preparation of our minds for the next one.)

Well, the list of subversive pictures having evaporated, the friendly witnesses were hard put to justify all the headlines and klieg lights that awaited their painstaking efforts. But they were resourceful if nothing else. They next came forward with the notion that although we, the unfriendly 19 and 68 others of our fellow workers (they apparently have an unfailing slide rule that enables them to tell exactly who is an American and who isn't), they said that although we actually didn't make subversive pictures, we did slip in a line here or a lift of an eyebrow there. Well, this turned out to be another blind news-alley. They just couldn't find the lines and even Mr. Menjou's eyebrows aren't that expressive.

Finally the testimony boiled down to this: All right, we don't make subversive pictures and we don't put in subversive lines or eyebrows, but we try to—only they're watching and they take them out as soon as we put them in. . . . Now if this were a court of law, what would our attorneys have asked these witnesses? What lines? In what pictures? Who put them in? Who took them out? Who delegated these characters to decide what the American people should or should not see?

But no, you can't ask those questions. This is not a court of law. This isn't even an inquiry. This is Won-

derland where the Mad Queen needs neither evidence nor a crime to shout "Off with their heads!" And their witnesses need no more than their private hates and fears to proclaim to the world that our film industry is infiltrated with foreign agents seeking to destroy our government.

What about this much heralded connection between the Kremlin and Beverly Hills? Do the wires run underground or do special couriers arrive by submarine for midnight conferences on the beach at Santa Monica? This is such patent nonsense that I am not going to make a serious reply. But I say this—that anyone who makes a charge of treason against a fellow American and does not name the time, the place and the deed is guilty of the most vicious conduct since the infamous informers in the reign of the Roman emperors.

But surely the 19 unfriendly witnesses, dragged out of our peaceful lives into a fantastic proceeding, must be guilty of something. Where you have 19 defendants, you must have a crime. What was it? What had we done?

**W**ELL, the real nature of our offense came to me crystal-clear a few days after the hearings were over. I went up to Hyde Park. It was a beautiful fall day and those pleasant acres of Hudson Valley land made me feel as though I had been in a foreign country—an enemy country, and was returning home. It was the reverse trip through the Looking Glass. Suddenly I was in the real world—the world of sanity and dignity and peace.

Although this was not a special day, I saw to my surprise a long line of people patiently waiting to see the Roosevelt home, probably as many as 20 were scattered over the grounds. And something struck me right away. These people didn't act like sightseers. They hadn't come to carve their initials in the great elms that shade the President's home.

I walked back to the grave. The small enclosure was ringed with hushed people. Not even a child made a sound, so deep and eloquent and pervading was that silence. I glanced in their faces—Americans native and foreign-born, white, Negro, doctor, storekeeper and shoe-shine man. All kinds of people united by a common loss, a common grief. No, not sightseers but pilgrims looking for their bearings, men twice forgotten who came with a half-formed hope that the simple slab of white marble would give them back their voice. And in the eyes of many were tears and I felt these tears were not alone for the dead.

For what have we, the living, left of all this man bequeathed us? Where is the security we'd begun to feel for our jobs, our unions, our living standards?

Where are the social gains hard-won in the '30's? Where is the growing national consciousness that all human beings have a common origin and common interests, that there is no such thing as a separated minority, racial or political, in a really healthy country? And where is the One World of peace that was his final testament, witnessed by Wendell Willkie and men of good will of all parties and countries? There is no sensible man, no matter how naive politically, who doesn't know in his heart that this heritage is being squandered by those in high places entrusted to execute his will—our national unity turned into a criss-cross of hates and prejudices—our economy of reason and safeguards turning back into the predatory chaos of the twenties—freedom from fear being transformed into fear of freedom—our allied nations being turned into enemies and our real enemies treated as friends because they look like better business risks in the grab-bag of imperialism—our One World a uranium sphere with a burning fuse.

And what is our crime, nineteen among all the dis-

inherited? It's very simple. We're guilty of remembering . . . of remembering what our Roosevelt heritage really was—and refusing to settle for the tinny phrases of self-proclaimed patriots.

Yes, we remember, but we're not alone in remembering. We're really no different from those people who stood in Hyde Park that afternoon in silent remembrance. We're a little more articulate, so we came first. But you'd better watch them, Mr. Thomas—they're potentially more dangerous than we. I'd give you their numbers only your files wouldn't hold them, because their numbers are millions. And they'll find a voice for the one they lost. Suppress them if you can, drag them through your inquisitions, label them with your fear-words, denounce them in your press—but you'll never silence them. We're earth-bound people, all of us, and we see our way only dimly. But this we know instinctively—that it winds not back into the dark caves from which we emerged but toward the promised clearing where we can lift our heads and take our bearings from the stars.

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*America keeps its atom bomb secrets and begins to lose its liberties.*

LONDON TIMES, COMMENTING ON THOMAS  
COMMITTEE HOLLYWOOD HEARINGS

*Those nations who profess to fear our methods most will soon be most closely imitating those methods.*

ADOLF HITLER



# A Statement of Policy

*A statement of policy adopted by the Screen Writers' Guild at the August 14, 1947 membership meeting:*

The House Committee on Un-American Activities has announced that its hearings concerning Hollywood will commence September 23. It is apparent from the statements of committee members, investigators and witnesses that the immediate target of these hearings will be the democratic guilds and unions of the picture industry. In the sub-committee hearings this spring, the Screen Writers' Guild was slanderously attacked as the center of subversive activity in Hollywood and afforded no opportunity to answer the charge. We are now sufficiently acquainted with the record and methods of this committee to know positively that there is no way to obtain a fair hearing under its auspices for our side of the case. For these reasons, and because every intelligent American knows that the eventual target of the committee is the freedom of the screen and American democratic rights in general, it is fitting that the Screen Writers' Guild should issue the following call to the other employee and employer organizations in the industry:

That the various guilds, unions and producer organizations in Hollywood unite in opposition to the conspiracy against the motion picture industry between a few individuals within the industry and the controlling faction of the House Committee on un-American Activities; that these groups, representing the overwhelming majority sentiment of the industry, use every means at their disposal to expose in advance the nature and purpose of the so-called "hearings" now scheduled for September 23; and that these groups combine their talents and existing channels for appealing to public opinion in order to present our side of the story to the American people during and after the committee sessions in Washington.

*A resolution subsequently adopted (Oct. 13, 1947) by the Executive Board of the Screen Writers' Guild and the Screen Directors' Guild:*

"1. Official investigations into the political beliefs held by individuals are in violation of a sacred privilege guaranteed the citizen in this free Democracy.

"2. Such investigations are an abuse of the right of Congress to inquire into the matters of national interest.

"3. Official attempts to restrict individual expressions of opinion are likewise a violation of one and an abuse of the other.

"4. Any attempt on the part of an official body to set up arbitrary standards of Americanism is in itself disloyal to both the spirit and the letter of our Constitution.

"5. If any threat to our constitutional government is presented by subversive elements within the country, the machinery for combating and overcoming such is already in existence: namely, our law enforcement agencies and the courts. To assume the prerogative of those properly designated bodies amounts to charging them with incapability of maintaining law and order, and, in the light of their splendid records, such a charge is completely unwarranted.

"6. As Americans, devoted to our country and the Constitution, which is its spiritual shape and form, we hereby resolve to defend the reputation of the industry in which we work against attack by the House Committee on un-American Activities, whose chosen weapon is the cowardly one of inference and whose apparent aim is to silence opposition to their extremist views, in the free medium of motion pictures."

*For important policy resolutions implementing the stand of SWG on the Thomas Committee, blacklisting for reasons of political belief and screen censorship through coercion and fear, turn to pages 51 and 52 for official action taken by the membership at the Nov. 19 annual meeting.*

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(THIS CONCLUDES THE SPECIAL SECTION, FREEDOM vs. FEAR: THE FIGHT FOR THE AMERICAN MIND, PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE AND WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD.)

# Gregg Toland, Film-Maker

LESTER KOENIG

Illustrated by  
HARRY HORNER

LESTER KOENIG is a member of the Editorial Committee of The Screen Writer, and a frequent contributor. He is presently at Paramount under contract to Liberty Films as a writer and associate producer. He had a chance to gain first hand knowledge of Gregg Toland's camera technique during the production of *The Best Years of Our Lives*.

SEVERAL years ago, a leading European film man came to Hollywood, saw *Citizen Kane*, and told its cameraman, Gregg Toland, that he was "the greatest cameraman in the world."

"No," said Gregg. "That isn't so."

"Really," replied the European, "who is better?"

Gregg named two cameramen, then added, "I'm only third best."

Gregg may not be the best, or even third best cameraman in the world. But it is true that he is universally acclaimed, and a great many people abroad consider him one of the great artists of the film.

Unlike other creative and talented people who come to Hollywood after coming to maturity and reputation in the theatre, literature, radio or related media, the growth of the cameramen because of the nature of their work, has been indigenous to Hollywood. For that reason, understanding a man like Gregg Toland, is to understand one of the strongest aspects of the complex Hollywood character. Gregg is what I call a film-maker, and a professional.

The start of the Toland career was not very spectacular. It began in 1919, when he was an office boy at the Fox Studios on Western Avenue. One day he looked up and saw a cameraman on a parallel, cranking away.

"I never forgot that sight," Gregg said, somewhat embarrassed by his youthful romanticism. "It seemed so glamorous and I made up my mind that's what I wanted to be.

"Didn't you have any previous interest in photography? Boy turns hobby into paying proposition, and all that sort of thing?"

"No," he said, "I didn't have the faintest interest in photography. It just seemed exciting to sling a tripod over your shoulder, and it seemed mysterious to go into a dark room and load film." He laughed. "And besides, an office boy in those days made twelve dollars a week, and an assistant cameraman made eighteen."

"Do you still feel being a cameraman is 'exciting' and 'mysterious'?" I asked.

"Yes, I do," he said. He said it in a way that

showed he knew it wasn't the sophisticated thing to admit. Gregg is not a naive man, and he knows how ridiculous enthusiasm for your work can make you appear to your friends. Yet, the fact that Gregg can still feel this excitement and mystery gives him a decided advantage over some of his more jaded colleagues.

Gregg worked as an assistant cameraman for a good many years through the Twenties, through the golden days of Hollywood's prosperity and madness, days when Tom Mix, William Farnum and Theda Bara were stars on the Fox lot. His first jobs were on two-reel Al St. John comedies.

"By the way," Gregg said, "I'll tell you frankly I was a very good assistant. I made sixty dollars a week when the others were only making twenty-five or thirty. But I was worth it. I was proud of the camera. I used to stay on nights and polish it."

Finally, in 1929, the hard work paid its dividend. Gregg left the assistant ranks and teamed with George Barnes to photograph his first picture, *The Trespasser*, starring Gloria Swanson, and directed by Edmund Goulding.

"We had twelve cameras shooting simultaneously to cover various set-ups, and we had two sound tracks going. In those days we didn't know how to cut sound, so we'd shoot the sound in one solid unit, and then cut the film from our twelve cameras to fit the track. Since all our cameras ran continuously, on some days we had 30,000 feet of rushes."

The early, experimenting days of sound were the formative period for Gregg's technique. After *The Trespassers*, he did more pictures with George Barnes: *The Devil Dancer* starring Gilda Grey, and *The Rescue* starring Ronald Colman.

His first picture on his own was Eddie Cantor's *The Kid From Spain*, which Samuel Goldwyn produced in 1931. It was a musical and it was made before the days of the playback. Instead of the current practice of pre-recording a musical number and then photographing it to synchronize with the sound, the orchestra was recorded as it played on the set. Gregg had to keep two cameras going together. When one would



move in for a close shot, the second would be moving back for a long shot.

The men who made pictures in those days had to be the inventors of their own technique. Today, Gregg feels we may have lost something, a stimulus to our creative thinking, because so much of the inventing has been done before. In the past, many brilliant things reached the screen because a technical problem had to be overcome by men of imagination who had no one to stand over them and say, "You can't do it *that* way, because *this* is the way we always do it."

In a very real sense, as a partial list of his over forty films indicate, Gregg grew to maturity with the medium: *Tugboat Annie* (1933), *Roman Scandals* (1933), *Nana* (1934), *We Live Again* (1934), *Les Misérables* (1935), *Splendor* (1935), *Dark Angel* (1935), *These Three* (1936), *Beloved Enemy* (1936), *Dead End* (1937), *Kidnapped* (1938), *Intermezzo* (1939), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *Long Voyage Home* (1940), *Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *Ball of Fire* (1941), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *The Little Foxes* (1941),

During the war Gregg served in the U. S. Navy where he made films, in the Pacific, and later in South America. In 1945, he returned to the Goldwyn Studios, where he has been working almost consistently for over twenty years, to do *The Best Years of Our Lives*.



"If you study the faces about you, you will find they are not all the same color."

GREGG's value as a cameraman transcends the concrete aspects of his work in the films he has photographed. He is a highly articulate man, who has done a great deal of creative thinking about the func-

tion of a cameraman in the complicated series of personal and technical relationships which are necessary to the making of a film.

In trying to work out some standard of judging photographic quality, he found the conventional criteria inadequate. For example, the terms contrast, texture, balance and composition are used in judging the quality of photography. A scene is well photographed, supposedly, if the cameraman has been guided by accepted principles regarding these elements. It is customary to balance off the faces of various actors in a scene so that there are no jarring contrasts. However, if you study the faces about you, you will find they are not all the same color. To be true to reality, the cameraman would have to recognize that, and accept it.

"Yet," Gregg explained, "in *The Best Years of Our Lives* when Fred Derry (Dana Andrews) comes home to his father, (Roman Bohnen) and step-mother, (Gladys George), I was criticized because I didn't eliminate the contrasts in the tone of the faces. It was done deliberately. I wanted to allow the audience to see the white, unhealthy appearing step-mother, the drink-flushed father, and the healthy young bombardier. It seemed to me that helped tell the story."

It is the story which matters most to Gregg. He has gone beyond the literal rules of camera grammar to use the written word as his point of departure. He feels motion picture photography can be judged good or bad only in its relation to helping tell the story.

Obviously, if the screenplay describes a plain girl, the cameraman isn't helping the story any if he makes a gorgeous glamour closeup. In Hollywood, studio policy usually results in the cameraman trying to make the plain heroine as glamorous as possible. It is just this kind of disregard for story values which concerns Gregg most in his thinking about standards of motion picture photography in Hollywood today.

Recently, a test of a young actor was made by one of Hollywood's leading directors, with a reputation for brilliant camera effects. The actor was seated behind a table, seen in three-quarter profile. A man was seated in the foreground, asking him the usual "personality" questions. The man was smoking a cigarette, and the cigarette smoke was artfully worked into the composition. It was a beautifully "composed" shot, with only one drawback: because the actor was placed in the background of the shot, and because the smoke partially concealed him, the function of the test had been subverted, and a prominent director who was viewing the test with an eye to hiring the actor, commented, "Very fine cigarette smoke. Now, if you bring me a shot where I can see the actor, I'll be able to tell whether or not we can use him."

This is crude criticism, and a fairly obvious ex-

ample: Of course, one would say, you should be able to see the actor in a test. But how can you apply this functional, or utilitarian doctrine to scenes in a film? Do you mean all photography should be "newsreel" in quality to be realistic?

Gregg's own account of his approach to a few of his films may throw some light on the matter. Since each of the stories posed different problems, no set formula could be used. Gregg felt he had to study the script, discuss the story with the director, and evolve a separate style for each picture.

"*Wuthering Heights*," he explained, "was a soft picture, diffused with soft candle-lighting effects. I tried to make the love scenes beautiful in a romantic way. It was a love story, a story of escape and fantasy. So I tried to keep it that way photographically, and let the audience dream through a whirl of beautiful closeups.

"On the other hand, *Grapes of Wrath* had to be a sharp picture. It was a story of unhappy people, people of the earth, who had real problems and who suffered. So we made it very sharp. There wasn't any makeup used. The picture had some extreme effects in low key, but they were, I think, real. As I remember, the camera moved only once—a long travel shot through the sordid streets of a Hooverville. It was what the occupants of the car, after the long drive to a promised haven, were examining. Photography such as we had in *Wuthering Heights* could ruin a picture like *Grapes of Wrath* completely.

"*Long Voyage Home* was a mood picture. Storywise, ('storywise,' significantly enough, is one of Gregg's favorite words), it was a series of compositions of the mood of the men aboard the ship. It was a story of what men felt rather than what they did. The camera never moved in that picture.

"*Citizen Kane* was a great experiment. It was a story of Kane's personality, what he had done to other people, what his life meant. It was a psychological story, yet the external realities were very important. It required a still different kind of photography, an expansion of camera technique beyond the usual limitations. Many points of view had to be shown. We had to experiment because the scope of the story demanded it. *Kane's* photography would scarcely have suited *Wuthering Heights* or even *Grapes of Wrath*. We experimented in forced focus depth, in travel shots, in startling effects, and in full ceilinged sets.

"*The Best Years of Our Lives* was another experiment. But in a different way. It was Wyler's first picture after the war and was my first black and white since the war. We talked at length about the story and decided it demanded simple, unaffected realism. Willy had been thinking a lot, too, during the war.

He had seen a lot of candid photography and lots of scenes without a camera dolly or boom. He used to go overboard on movement, but he came back with, I think, a better perspective on what was and wasn't important. Anyway, Willy left me pretty much alone. While he rehearsed, I would try to find a method of shooting it. Usually he liked it. When he didn't, he was the boss and we did it his way. However at this point we understand each other pretty well and Willy knows that I will sacrifice photography any time if it means a better scene. I, in turn, know that he will listen to any suggestion. I think *Best Years* was well photographed because the photography helped to tell the story. It wasn't breathtaking. It would have been wrong to strive for effects. We were after simple reproduction of the scenes played without any chi-chi. The only time I held my breath was in the powder-room scene when I thought we might be getting arty and trying to prove how damn clever we were instead of playing a scene. But Willy was right. It worked for us. If I had to label the photographic style of the picture, I'd call it 'honest'."

GREGG'S working habits may be of interest since they run counter to so many established views about Hollywood's creators. While it is true that technical



Under ideal conditions the cameraman should work very closely with his director.

personnel on a production, and cameramen in particular, put in long and hard hours, it seemed to me, that as I observed Gregg during the production of *The*



*Best Years Of Our Lives*, that he and William Wyler, the director, worked harder than anyone else in Hollywood.

Under ideal working conditions, the cameraman should be included in the preparation of a picture. He should work very closely with his director. "Unfortunately," as Gregg pointed out, "they don't in this business. The director may work for months on a story, but the cameraman is tossed a script a few days before shooting." In *Best Years*, Gregg worked on the picture from its inception, getting each version of the screenplay, and the revised pages as they came from the writer, Robert E. Sherwood. This enabled Gregg to plan the production requirements, to scout locations and shoot photographic tests. But, in addition, it enabled him to familiarize himself with the story itself, so that he had a thorough "storywise" understanding of each scene, of each character. With this background, and with constant discussions with Wyler, Gregg was able to use his technique in the best interests of the story as a whole.

During the writing of the script, I remember going out with Wyler and Gregg to look over the location for the exterior of Fred Derry's father's house. On our return to the studio, Gregg suggested that I take Sherwood out to see it, partly to see if it was what Sherwood had visualized, and partly to see if it would give him any ideas. A few days later, when Bob Sherwood and I went out and looked the place over, Bob said he was very glad he came because seeing the dilapidated exterior of the Derry home made him realize the audience would not have to be told very much specifically about Fred's background. One shot of the wretched exterior would give a very real feeling of what his life had been like before he became an officer in the Air Forces. Therefore, added exposition in dialogue would be superfluous.

Gregg is in an advantageous position for working with writers and directors, because as well as a cameraman, he is a key figure in the operation of the Samuel Goldwyn production set-up. He is under exclusive contract to Goldwyn, and works very closely with the production executives in all their planning. The average cameraman works by the picture, and consequently is not in a position to add efficiency to production. Other companies might well profit by Goldwyn's example of more closely integrating their able and experienced cameramen with production planning.

In any discussion of the Toland style, the question of forced focus is bound to rise. At the time of *Citizen Kane*, it was quite extreme to see objects 18 inches and 200 feet from the camera simultaneously in focus. Now, of course, we take such shots for granted. Carrying

focus is obtained by use of fast film, stopping the lens down to a very small aperture, and a lighting key much hotter than that used conventionally. "Forced focus," Gregg explained, "is not a trick, and should not be considered as such. It is an aid to directors, since it gives them more freedom in staging scenes. As Willy pointed out in his article in last February's *Screen Writer*, 'I can have action and reaction in the same shot, without having to cut back and forth from individual shots of the characters. This makes for smooth continuity, an almost effortless flow of the scene, for much more interesting composition in each shot, and lets the spectator look from one to the other character at his own will, do his own cutting'."

"Beyond that," Gregg said, "it helps the audience see more, and consequently see more *story*."

"What about your photography in the Navy? Do you think it had any effect on your style?"

"This is an odd thing to admit," Gregg said, "but I found many times when I didn't have all the Hollywood equipment at my elbow, that the results were superior. Why? They looked real. No halos of back-lighting, and no soft flattering modelling. For example, in Honolulu I used to go into homes or business houses to do a short sequence. Through the windows I'd have an *f.22*. exposure. Inside, an *f.3.5* exposure. I would go ahead, photograph for interior, and get an extremely over-exposed exterior. But it looked real. I suppose some place in between the extreme of such candid photography and the extreme commercial front-office-style, there must be a compromise point where we can make pictures with realism. I think there is a noticeable trend in that direction."

In addition to his technical skill, Gregg has the tenacity to follow through on all details of the picture which relate to his camera work. He took the trouble to run and check 41 prints of *The Best Years*. As the picture opened in Los Angeles, he went to each theatre to examine the projection equipment. He ordered new lenses, had them coated, reduced the size of screens, and in each instance, improved the quality of projection.

"In all fairness," Gregg said, "I must tell you that most cameramen never get the opportunity to do this, but I think if they fought hard enough, it would be possible."

GREGG is a man with opinions who is not afraid to air them, and as a result he is not known for his ability to make himself popular with other cameramen. Recently Gregg showed me a telegram he sent to a very well-known colleague of his. In it, he deflated that gentleman considerably for taking credit in a

magazine article for a "new" development in lighting technique. Gregg pointed out how ridiculous his colleague's claim was, and added that he himself had used that same "new" technique several years before.

"I hope ——— has a sense of humor," Gregg said.

"I think he'll need more than a sense of humor. He isn't going to like you very much when he sees this."

"Well, that's all right," Gregg said, grinning. "I do this sort of thing all the time. They resent it, but they're probably used to it by now."

In response to my questions, Gregg gave me a few of his views which have not served to endear him to members of the ASC. "In my opinion," he stated, "there are about twenty really top cameramen in the world. I would say that about twelve of them are in Hollywood. The others run from 'adequate' to 'use only if necessary'."

"What's the trouble with them?" I asked.

"Well, most of them take the road of least resistance. They do whatever is easiest. But worse than that, I think too few cameramen realize dramatic and story values. They don't keep abreast of current plays and books. Their interest seems to center mainly on how late a call I can manage in the morning to how early can we finish today."

"We hear many criticisms about Hollywood's lack of maturity in terms of story material," I pointed out, "but it is taken for granted that the technical job Hollywood does is the finest in the world. How does this fit in with what you just said?"

"I disagree that all our technical jobs are done as well as they can be done. For instance, I feel that too many cameramen are apt to work out a certain key which they can handle, and then photograph everything, tragedy or comedy, in the same way. They don't work to adapt their style to their story. Furthermore, cameramen often have ideas which might entail extra work on their part, and which they don't suggest to the director for that reason. I'll give you a theoretical example which will give you some idea of what I mean:

"Supposing the script indicates a group of partisans making plans for a raid. In the far corner is the leader's girl. She listens, worried.

"One approach to this might be a group shot and several tighter shots, always with the leader as the focal point. The director might plan to make cuts of the girl listening. Now, the cameraman might suddenly think, 'It would be better to start with a group, slowly move past intent faces, with the leader always in the background. The camera nears the leader and then slowly pans into a big closeup of the girl. We see how upset she is, and we dissolve on her doubt.' Our cameraman thinks that might be swell, but does he bring it up? Well, let's see: It would mean a large problem

in lighting faces with lights that would miss a camera shadow. It would involve focus of foreground faces and background faces; also a problem of sliding diffusion as the camera pans to the girl; also he probably couldn't get the light exactly where he wanted it for the girl due to camera movement. So, does he mention it? No, indeed. Why stick out his neck? Even though his idea would have furthered the dramatic tension of the scene and planted the girl's worry more pointedly, our cameraman will go along with the no more than adequate idea of the director. That's what I mean by taking the path of least resistance."

"Okay," I said, "suppose all you've said is true. It is particularly the fault of the individual cameraman, or is there a deeper fault?"

"Yes, I think there is," Gregg said. "A great many



"A girl is often so old by the time she proves her ability that out comes the burlap in front of the lens."

of the stories we make aren't very stimulating. Sometimes you wonder why they're made at all. That's not a great inducement to do your best work. I know when it's been my misfortune to have to photograph one of those run-of-the-mill pictures, I've been pretty unhappy. There's absolutely no opportunity for ideas. I've said to my wife, 'I feel just like a whore, doing it for money. If I had any guts, I'd quit this picture and we would go down to Rio, or some place.' But you never do. You just keep on hoping that the next opportunity will be better. I suppose that's the human weakness of comfort and security."

"You sound exactly like any number of writers who've had to write that stuff you didn't like," I told him.

"Well, they haven't got any monopoly on frustrations, you know."

"I'm sure it'll make them much happier to hear



that. By the way, what about writers in relation to cameramen. Do you think closer liaison is practical?"

"Definitely," said Gregg. "The cameraman should be asked to sit down with a lot of other people on the picture *before* production, and that would include the writer. I am positive that great production economies can be effected by cameramen and writers discussing the script."

"Here's a question a lot of writers would like to have answered: What happens to the camera directions they put into their screenplays in capital letters? You know, CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY TO, HIGH ANGLE SHOT, CAMERA TRUCKS, MEDIUM CLOSE, REVERSE TWO SHOT BUD PAST BEULAH, and so on?"

"The answer to that is pretty simple. Directors and cameramen over the years have developed a method of reading scripts so they do not see these directions at all."

"Is that your last word on the subject?"

"No, the director can't work out staging and mechanics in his office, so why should the writer worry about trucking shots, panning shots, boom shots and all the rest? Usually he's talking about a subject of which he has a very limited knowledge. (Although, I'll grant most writers have had no opportunity to learn.) Writers like Sherwood write in master scenes, and don't go into detailed camera instructions. That's the way it should be. My advice to writers, especially the younger ones who are feeling their way in the medium, would be to concentrate their worrying on the content of the scene and the dialogue."

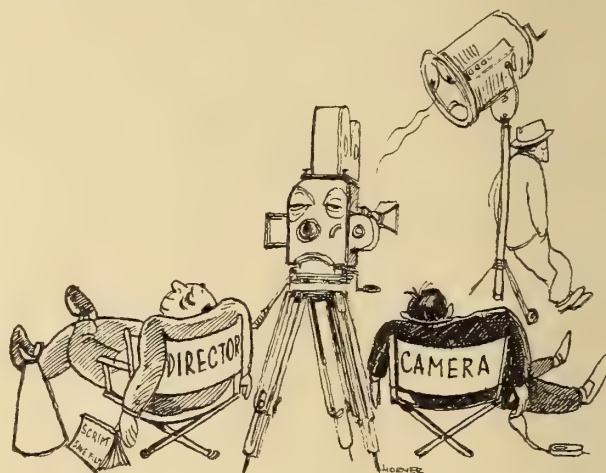
**A**MONG other factors which keep cameramen from doing more creative work, Gregg includes the unimaginative quality of a great deal of directing. There are quite a few old-fashioned, tired directors who are still coasting on past reputations. And there are also quite a few directors who find it difficult to work up much enthusiasm for run-of-the-mill assignments, and are content with doing a routine job of turning pieces of paper into pieces of celluloid.

"When you're working with a director with no enthusiasm for what he's doing, it's hard for the cameraman to get enthused," Gregg said. "If the director makes a two shot, and then a couple of closeups, and plays every scene the same way, no cameraman in the world can exert much creative energy. And then there's the director who wants to make his set-ups 'exciting' and tries to use a 30mm. lens all the time. This can drive a cameraman crazy, because you can't use a wide-angle lens without a knowledge of how and when to use it.

"Or you get the director who wants to move his camera all the time. My own view is that there is a sensible point of view in between static set-ups and constant movement. I've gone to both extremes in *Long Voyage Home* and *Citizen Kane*. Now I think a better point of view has been reached with Willy in *Best Years*. We didn't have any preconceived rules; we moved when it seemed that helped tell the story best. Camera movement shouldn't be noticed, because it takes your attention from the actors, and what is happening to them. Yet, some directors, because a scene has a great deal of dialogue, have the extremely false notion that camera movement will make the scene *appear* to move. This doesn't help the cameraman any, either."

Going on from these specific criticisms, Gregg feels that the industry in general should be criticized. He feels good pictures aren't being made, and he feels that you can't blame audiences. He has quite a healthy respect for the quality of the American audience, and doesn't believe that pictures have to be geared to the level of the twelve-year-old mind to be successful.

In general, his main criticism is, he believes pictures have lost reality and imagination. They are conven-



If you're working with a director with no enthusiasm, it's hard for the cameraman to get enthused.

tional in writing, direction and photography. One of his deep resentments is the star system.

"It means we are making pictures with a 'personality' rather than story. That's why many cameramen are forced to sacrifice everything in order to keep some old bag playing young women. And when I say old bag, that's what I mean. A girl is often so old by the time she proves her ability that out comes the burlaps in front of the lens.

"The average producer will answer that he has to protect his investment. But why not protect it with a good story, script and director, and then cast it with

the best actors for the parts, not box-office names. I know the answer to that one, too: 'Pictures are a business for profit.' So they are, but it would be fine once-in-a-time though, to see an honest motion picture.

"Aren't you tired of seeing some glamour star playing a shopgirl in New York, living in an apartment that would cost ten times her monthly salary, wearing dresses that she couldn't possibly afford, and with a hairdo that you can only get by coming to a movie studio and having a staff of specialists create for two hours before you come on the set?"

I admitted I was tired of it, and he sighed, "I could go on and on, but why?"

"Well," I said, "partly because it's good to get it out of your system, and mostly because I want to know how you feel so I can write a proper interview."

"In that case," he said, "I'll go on. A lot of people won't like this, but I think it's true. At least, it's the way I've seen it from the inside over a period of years. I think fewer creative pictures are being made these days as compared to 20 years ago because most of the people directly responsible are more smug and better paid. The unions protect many positions, where in the old days it was touch and go. In those days any youngster could start in the picture business, if he had the stuff. Salaries were much smaller, but I think there was a greater pride of achievement. Generally speaking, most people today have the attitude that everything has been tried and present methods are the best. Now, I'm not saying the back-lot people all have economic security, or even all the so-called creative or talent groups are living off the fat of the land. I'd say, though, that what I've said is too true of the people who make the decisions, and who are in the last analysis responsible for what goes on in this town.

"Naturally, I don't speak of the few persons who have a burning desire to accomplish things, but who are usually held down by a production office or a producer with a 'Why take a chance?'

"That's why making *Citizen Kane* was so wonderful. Orson Welles (who directed it) and I had a wonderful time. It was the first time I had encountered anyone with the authority to do *anything* and not be confronted by the front office. I suggested and tried things I'd been dreaming of for a long time.

"We made mistakes in it, but we also did a few startling things which people still discuss. I might add

that one reason for many of the effects was a lack of money. We just couldn't afford to have an audience in the opera house when the camera was shooting from behind Dorothy Comingore, the singer. So we *thought*. I put up a series of baby shots in a black opera set and trained them at the camera. I believe that the ultimate effect was more desirable than an expensive audience of extra people. This is an example of what I said earlier. People out here no longer ponder; they no longer have the same challenges to meet. There is money enough, so they build enough set for safety—just in case they need it. And so it goes—everyone protects himself, and everything sails along just fine.

"*Kane* may not be a great picture, but I honestly believe it excited more comment and made more people snap out of their complacency than any other picture in years.

"By the way, I want to be sure to make this point. I have worked under contract to Samuel Goldwyn for many years and some people might have the mistaken notion that I am saying these things in criticism of him. That is definitely not the case. I sincerely believe that Goldwyn will allow me more freedom, more experiments and more ideas than anyone at the moment. I do not say this to protect my contented feeling, as Goldwyn may have my contract back any morning he chooses, and without a settlement, and he knows it. I say it because I believe he tries harder than any other person in this industry. This doesn't mean that he is always right, but he *tries*. I wish more people did."

In Hollywood today, where the tendency is toward a standardized product, and toward conformity on all levels, citizens like Gregg Toland have a value far beyond their skills or techniques. As individualists, they have the ability to subordinate themselves and their work to the cooperative creative process. Yet, they retain their personalities and identities. Because he has a personality, Gregg has personal opinions, and they are reflected in the pictures he makes. Too many people in Hollywood have given up the fight to retain their identities, and when asked for opinions, answer "I can do it whichever way you want." rather than "I think it would be better this way." In a community where so many people are loth to speak their minds, men like Gregg are good to have around.

He may not always be right, but at least he tries.



# A Man Can Stand Up

PAUL S. NATHAN

PAUL S. NATHAN is a Paramount representative in New York, covering the legitimate stage field. He is a playwright and former drama critic. He writes a weekly motion picture column for Publishers' Weekly.

AS was to have been expected, a great many screen writers, having spent most of their working and waking hours for some time now in a world of fantasy, are over-reacting to the reality which has lately been thrust upon them. The specific reality I refer to is the international economic crisis, with its cutting down of motion picture markets, jobs, and rewards.

The realization that our movies are considered a luxury in foreign lands rather than a morale-building necessity has come as a shock to a lot of us connected with the industry. Even worse is the feeling that quite a few of our former admirers don't really object to being deprived of our pictures and are as a matter of fact, relieved by the recent turn of events. In particular, certain spokesmen claiming to represent the British public have been quite explicit on this point.

Hollywood, as nearly as I can make out, has always been a community with a high incidence of bad consciences. Artistically, that is. (The other varieties of bad conscience I leave to the exploration of the Jimmie Fidlers.) The screen writer is famous for his sense of guilt in compromising with the truth as he sees it—and getting paid so well besides. Inevitably, then, censure from abroad—or even the cool indifference manifested in some quarters—has led to the donning of sackcloth and ashes at home.\*

To be sure, this sound of lamentation does not arise exclusively from the writers themselves. The more sophisticated movie critics, too, have been right in there bitching.

Genuine humility never hurt anybody, least of all an artist, and when accompanied by a strong resolve

to do better it is a step on the road to maturity. Hollywood will undoubtedly profit by this long overdue soul-searching.

But brothers, don't let your sense of failure get the best of you. You're really not that bad. Honest!

Anyone with a mind can reel off a generous list of memorable Hollywood films, all the way from *All Quiet on the Western Front* to W. C. Fields' priceless *It's A Gift*. Some years, admittedly, it's been hard to get enough titles together for a ten-best list, and the complaints about quality seem to have increased the closer we draw to the present. Even so, you don't have to use a fine-toothed comb to come up with such notable recent specimens as *Boomerang*, *The Lost Weekend*, *Crossfire*, *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Story of G. I. Joe*. Perfect pictures? Perhaps not. Nor am I saying they and their kind constitute a high enough proportion of the hundreds released annually. But they do serve as a reminder that there are *some* films we can afford to be proud of. James Agee, who stirringly hymned the praises of *Monsieur Verdoux* in *The Nation*, later remarked that it had so little in common with the work generally done in Hollywood he didn't regard it as a Hollywood product at all. The fact remains that it *was* made in Hollywood, by a man tightly bound up with the history of that community, and I don't see any reason why we should discount this. *Citizen Kane* was made there, too, and *The Big Parade*, and *Sullivan's Travels*—none of them cut from pattern.

Even before the British tax came along to intensify it, the average American screen writer's inferiority complex was marked. Privately, I imagine, most of them felt they ought to be creating something worth while and enduring for book publication or the stage. This was—and is—a sound ambition, not to be discouraged. But speaking out of personal experience as a professional theatre-goer, I should in all honesty say that the more I see of Broadway the higher my regard for Hollywood.

Readers of George Jean Nathan will doubtless be

\* If Irwin Shaw's mood is typical, the recent "investigation" by the House Un-American Activities Committee, sitting in Washington, has also contributed to the screen writer's dissatisfaction with the work he has been turning out in Hollywood. Blasting away in the Sunday drama section of the *New York Times* for November 2, Shaw exhorts: "Leave the real movie making to the French, the Italians and the British, who have demonstrated they have the courage to present life as it is, and not as a political committee thinks it ought to be."

appalled. My namesake has always dismissed motion pictures contemptuously and has mustered imposing arguments to support his point of view. He demonstrates the difficulty, for example, if not the utter impossibility of making any adult films under the existing Production Code. He is right as far as he goes: the Code is a great liability. But he does not go far enough, for good movies have been achieved in spite of it. Nathan also has a way of damning Hollywood as a whole by taking swipes at some of its poorer efforts. Not that I've read all of the old boy by any means, but I can't recall his ever doing a critique of a really fine film—something of the calibre of *The Informer* or *Pride of the Marines*.

Nathan, unfortunately, is not alone in his attitude, which can only be described as supercilious. Even so sound a critic as Richard Watts, Jr. of the *New York Post* could state in his review of *Laura* (stage version): "... to tell you the melancholy truth, it was so much more skillfully managed by Hollywood that last night's presentation at the Cort theatre seemed a wan and wobegone affair"—and then go on to say: "To one who regards the theatre as infinitely superior to the cinema, it is embarrassing to admit that the screen *Laura* was superior to the stage edition in every way."

What, in heaven's name, makes the theatre *infinitely* superior to the cinema if the cinema provides superior entertainment even part of the time?

MY indulgence toward the screen and depreciation of the theatre might be objected to on the ground that, as a play appraiser for a picture company, I am obliged to see every show that opens on Broadway, including all the short-lived horrors, whereas I can select my own screen fare. It's a fact that I usually arrange to miss the bum movies, yet I can't conceive that the worst of them would be any more distressing than such Broadway abortions as *Pasquale Never Knew* or *Victory Belles*, which, if my readers are lucky, they've never heard of. In spite of the remark attributed to one of the collaborators on *Park Avenue*, "I'm going back to Hollywood where I can write a flop that'll be a hit," a flop in one medium is probably just as painful as in the other—at least as far as the audience is concerned.

Stinker for stinker, in ration to the number of plays and pictures produced in any twelvemonth, I've little doubt that the theatre and the movies are just about evenly matched. And though Broadway's current *Medea* and Hollywood's *Kiss of Death* are so far apart

in virtually every respect (except violence) that they can hardly be compared, each adds up to a job well done in its own terms.

When it comes to adaptations from novels, a rich source of material for both stage and screen, it's my impression that the movies have the edge—and a sharp one—over the stage. Back in 1939 a feeble rendering of *Wuthering Heights* lasted for twelve performances at the Longacre in New York; Mr. Goldwyn got a film of considerable beauty and poetry out of the same book. *The Good Earth*, *Jane Eyre*, *Rebecca*, and *A Farewell to Arms* (though this latter was marred on the screen by its ending) were all better on celluloid than behind the footlights. When you think of stories of such sweep and magnitude as *Mutiny On the Bounty* and *Gone With the Wind*, handsomely treated by Hollywood, you enter a realm where the playwrights can't even set foot. *Dodsworth* of course was a case where stage and screen both acquitted themselves with honor, and there have been instances when Broadway's dramatization of a novel was the definitive one—*Tobacco Road*, assuredly—but this is by no means common.

The translation of a play into a film is another matter. The play as originally conceived is generally more satisfactory. *Our Town* lost something before the cameras, and so in my opinion did *The Little Foxes*. Perhaps, on the other hand, *Dark Victory* as a Bette Davis vehicle was an improvement over the show in which Tallulah Bankhead appeared on the stage. And *Watch On the Rhine*, a pretty good play to begin with, was still more impressive as a picture, if memory serves.

It may seem that by saying "on the one hand yes, and on the other hand no," this article is rapidly getting to the point of proving nothing at all. Actually, it is not my intention to exalt Hollywood above New York or vice versa. And I would never question that our West Coast studios, even if they have done some splendid work, are too often run like factories or that our movie makers have much to learn from their colleagues overseas. Especially am I conscious of the vast fog in which the Production Code has blanketed the whole industry, and I am convinced that for pictures to realize anything like their full potential this fog must be dispelled.

My main reason for troubling to write a piece at all has simply been to say, Be fair to yourself, Hollywood. Things are tough all over, but don't on that account mistrust your own strength or deny your own accomplishments. A man can write for the screen and still hold his head up!



# Television's New Journalism

E. S. MILLS, JR.

*SWG member EDWIN S. MILLS, JR., has had long experience as a director and adaptor of television at WNTB in New York. He is a former editor of the Army-Navy Screen Magazine, and now is on leave of absence finishing a novel.*

IF its topnotch writers ever get up above \$500, it will be quite a surprise to them, and it will be a good many years before even that figure is available. Each week will probably require of the harried writer a couple of fourteen-hour days, a couple of days studying research, and the rest of the week fighting off that strange little pain in the stomach. Without a very tough fight by a union, there probably won't even be credits. But it's coming, coming quite quickly, this new field for writers. And the odds are that a lot of them will love it!

They'll be craftsmen in a brand new kind of craft, television journalism. But vastly unlike today's newsreel writers, who are generally neither writers nor newsmen, the writers for television's coming journalism are probably going to compete on the artistic level of the novel, the play, or the screenplay. For every one part of journalistic skill and two parts of technical movie know-how, they'll need about six or seven parts of sheer artistic sensitivity and creativity. They'll compare to a newsreel writer as a *Time* editor compares with a gumshoe police reporter. For the technique of journalism which I believe the cockeyed economics of television will compel producers to use is predicated upon the writer—a motion picture writer with imagination and creativity of an unusually high order.

For the sake of simplified semantics, let's give the men of the new craft a name. Arbitrarily, let's identify them as "film writers," and their craft as "film writing." For the moment, we'll briefly define their technique as the translation of already-shot film into a journalistic sight-and-sound story for the screen, almost exactly reversing the process used by the screen writer, who translates a story idea (fact or fiction) into film. Unlike his screen writing colleague, the film writer writes no dialogue; commentary—or narration—is his total province. Yet, as this article will attempt to show, the film writer may well become as important

to television as the screen writer has become to the industry affectionately called "the movies."

## 1

ONE night last summer, interested in seeing a television show a friend of mine was in, I stopped into a Sixth Avenue bar and asked the bartender if he would mind turning on the television set. He regarded me dimly, and referred me to the manager. When I repeated my request to the manager, he looked at his watch, and asked if the fights were on yet. I said no. He asked if it was a ball game, or a newsreel, and I said no. He asked me what the show was. I told him it a kind of audience participation show. He glanced down the bar at the dozen or so beer-drinking patrons, and then at me. He grinned, slowly. "Are you kiddin'?" he said. And then, to be courteous, he added "I got to think of the paying customers," and turned on his heel.

It was one of those little straws in the winds of television. Yet it was memorable. Possibly the manager stated a criticism of television that was a lot more profound than he knew. For quite possibly—as one of the paying customers himself—he was negatively expressing a nostalgic desire for television to be . . . television, and not a hybrid compounded of radio, stage, and motion pictures. It's certainly true that today's low budgets don't give television a chance to show what it can do. But perhaps, even the good programs today don't represent what the medium *should* do!

Artistically alone, it seems a little absurd to believe that television can *necessarily* do radio's job better, merely by adding sight. On the contrary, more often than not, a radio program suffers by adaptation. It comes out far less pleasurable to see than merely to hear; the audience realizes that a gentle imagination is a far more pleasing eye than the harsh reality of the television camera. Besides music, particularly, and a great deal of speech and even gags are for the ear; time and time again the eye will louse up a perfectly

good scene, or aria, or both. Aldous Huxley's "feelies," for instance, in adding the participation of another sense, would be highly restricted in subject matter.

Similarly with the addition of sight in the home: it must be able to do things which can not be supplied the ear. Bedevilled screen writers have long known how much effort and care it takes to visualize a musical number so that it will not bore the audience. Similarly in other radio formats: an audience will listen avidly for fifteen minutes to a commentator, letting his words supply mental pictures, whereas in television they won't *watch* him for more than one minute. Home audiences will listen uncomplainingly to three choruses of a popular band number, but will fidget and fuss before the end of the first chorus of it visually, unless there are cutaways and widespread visual variety.

As we'll see, to visualize radio effectively takes a lot of cash, extra cash, with the chances good that it won't be as pleasurable as it was to listen to. The potential set-buyer—the paying customer—might well say that if radio's no better seen than heard, why bother with television. He might well be right. If there's no gain in entertainment quality by visualizing radio, why on earth bother to go to the expense of doing so?

It seems even sillier for American television to arrogate to itself the capacity to compete artistically with Hollywood on any sustained scale. In the foreseeable future, the lush economics of Hollywood will always be able to purchase better writing, direction, talent, advertising, and production-ingredients than home television's sponsor-bound economics can ever afford. Theatre television is quite a different matter; it will neither be the one-spot kind of performance scheduling—with its unbelievable waste—which home television has adopted in following radio's patterns, nor will it be tied to the purse strings of the American advertiser. And in theatre television, with its box-office economics freed from sponsorship, the fabulously cheap production techniques of television in producing dramatic fare will compete disastrously with motion picture production. But this is another story; now, we are investigating only home television, whose paying customer is a man who bought a set, or may buy one tomorrow. His kind of television is an hourly affair in his own living room. And to attempt to make posturings like Hollywood over the screen of his set—poorer, shabbier, less talented posturings—is to invite comparisons which seriously jeopardize the future sale of sets to his friends.

## 2

**A**RTISTICALLY, imitating other media seems ridiculous. Economically, it's dangerous. For up to now, the pinstriped man in the plush office with

an autographed portrait of Little Punchies breakfast food on every wall and paperweight is the gentleman on whom home television's entire economy rests squarely. Someone must pay the bills of programming; the likelihood of a government tax, as in BBC, with subsequent subsidization of the industry, is highly unlikely in the U.S.A. of the N.A.M. It looks like the sponsor is it. Yet any affection he might have for television is purely secondary; his parish is the American consumer, his bible that sales graph in the corner, and his deity is nut-brown, crunchy, lunchy, hunchy Little Punchies—period. One can rest assured that this gentleman—with one eye glued on that graph, will not enter television because he loves the medium. We'll assume he's smart enough to be aware of the terrific capacity of television to sell Little Punchies. But we can also be sure he'll be twice damned—and once fired—if he lays out so much as one thin dime extra for the new medium over other media *unless* that little old graph works in direct dimewise proportion.

Today, he's contemplating as are most of his confreres—whether or not to go into television at all. If his eye is discerning, and his adman off hunting in Connecticut, the chances are that with a little thought, he'd eschew "imitative" programs quickly, and forever; his logic would show him that radio-like or movie-like programs lead him like a beguiling whore up an economic dead-end street. He'll realize they won't work, and that he'll have to look elsewhere for programming.

He might reason like this. Home television as an advertising medium, of course, must sell millions of sets before it pays off on that graph. He and his competitors must—at a dead loss for two or three or four years—pay for programs entertaining enough to lure Americans into wanting to buy those sets. If Americans can be persuaded to fork out the necessary cash, and do so, it's one hell of a fine medium to promote Little Punchies. But without the bait of good programs, the chances are dim that Americans would fork over \$400 on a gamble.

At first glance, he realizes, it looks like a highly justifiable loss for a few years; the end is worth it, and besides, his Public Relations man can plug him as public-minded—boosting a new medium. But then he takes a second glance, this time at television's cost figures. Television transmitting facilities would cost him locally about three times as much as radio, and many times more for intercity networking, once the networks stop absorbing half the cost. So far, however, it's all right, for the product-identifiability of television is about four times greater than radio.



Used to radio thinking, he then starts thinking in visualized-radio terms, and digging into the cost sheets on his desk. He blinks. The dim stare begins. Quite distinct from transmission costs, he finds, production costs—with their sets and costumes and line-memorizing and business rehearsals and camera rehearsals, would run him from three to twenty times as much as a comparable radio show.

Then he thinks farther. Each year, he allocates a certain amount of Little Punchies' gross to advertising. It's a tremendous figure, up in the millions, which his advertising agency men have taught him to spread around from billboards to newspapers to radio and back. He decides to see what would happen if he spent a full 50% of it on television alone, a very liberal percentage indeed. It comes out a million dollars, or roughly \$20,000 per show per week. And now for the rub. In radio, almost all of that \$20,000 would go to talent; in television, where he must pay rehearsal time plus all his other production costs, he must buy much cheaper talent, all the way down the line, with proportionate loss in show quality. In films, that \$20,000 would pay for about one-quarter of a reel of adequate dramatic entertainment. No matter how much saving he gets from the television technique of production, no matter how clever his artists, he can't compete with the forms he's imitating. He can't afford talent *half* as expensive as in a comparable radio show. He couldn't afford production *one-twentieth* as lavish as a comparable feature film production. And besides, the minute he found talented unknown artists, the other media would buy them away from him. And that budget is top, ridiculously high; it's more than even the most optimistic advertiser would fork out. What's more, he would have to spend that money for years when the graph didn't show a flicker of return. It's wrong. It doesn't jell, economically.

Inflexible and rigid as it must be, his budget licks him. It will lick him every time, no matter how many combinations of logic he might try to beat it. *He can't afford an imitative program good enough to sell home television to the public*, good enough to make people prefer turning on their television set to anything else. It's the simple fact of television's economics.

Today and for many years to come perhaps, a few advertisers are illogically pursuing the imitative pattern, finding sporadic "sleepers" of shows to keep their misdirected faith alive and whet their imitative appetite, clinging to the belief that television can do what radio and movies can do. They refuse to accept the relentless fact that their *budgets* will never permit them to do it as well. They can afford only enough to invite comparison, thereby slowly bastardizing the medium's chances of reaching the masses of consumers,

in whose name they are pouring useless money into their half-baked shows. They are forgetting the paying customer, and by so doing are spoiling home television as a means of moving their Little Punchies across American counters. Without a shift of direction, the medium will slowly dwindle and die like Stanley Steamers and American advertisers will be deprived of the greatest means of advertising ever devised, and the public will be denied one of the great inventions in domestic history.

A few months ago, one of the large television manufacturers announced a gimmick called Phone-Vision, a device predicated on this very inability of the sponsor to sustain the economic burden of the medium. It might well be the death-knell of imitative programming, for with it attached to one's set, a set-owner can call the telephone operator and ask to have his set plugged into an MGM musical, or Warner's latest Bogart-Bacall tragedy, for which he'll be charged, say seventy-five cents on the phone bill at the end of the month.

If this radical and exciting invention could beat through some very tough opposition from the movie exhibitors and from the networks (who are very chummy with the phone company, obviously), it would do a tremendous amount to make television set sales skyrocket, and could considerably enhance home television's potentialities as a medium in which to display Little Punchies. It would most probably seal forever the tongues of the advocates of the imitative kinds of television fare, for they would find themselves in competition *in the home* with Louis B. Mayer, and this they would not enjoy. Most important, it would make dazzling clear the necessity of finding something other than imitative programs, and finding them quick.

### 3

**I**MITATIVE programs can't beat the originals, that's all. The economy makes it impossible. And no commodity should be sold, or manufactured, as admittedly inferior to something which costs the consumer less.

Rather than being a permanently discouraging admission, this should be encouraging. Stripped of the pretense of imitation, there's nothing left for television to do but be . . . television, for the paying customers. And what should that be? Two things, certainly. One, it should be cheap enough so advertisers can afford it. Two, it should be as much as possible what the paying customer wants. In more idealistic terms, one might say (as about any fast-selling commodity) that it should achieve a basic function in, and contribution to, our society.

Viewed objectively, home television need not amount to more than what dreamers always pictured it to be before it became a reality: a device for seeing what is happening in the world beyond the living room, Jules Verne-like. Jokes about it have always dealt with the absurdity of outsiders entering one's room via a television screen, of seeing things one shouldn't see. Simply, it's a medium of information. It can—and probably should—answer the same curiosities that prompt us to buy the evening paper. It's reality, come down from the airwaves.

Journalism, the craft of recording and discussing reality, has always filled an extremely basic need, a social demand, like Milk of Magnesia. Radio's journalism, sadly constricted to sightlessness, has achieved little more than making information hourly available. But the journalism of television may well become the most important forward step in communication since the beginning of the printing press. It seems sensible to regard it as such.

There is ballast to the journalistic argument, and it's good ballast, too. Journalism answers the demands of cost and audience appeal. As far as cost goes, obviously reality is the cheapest visual pageant which a 12-inch screen can possibly convey. Well-chosen, it can have the movement and conflict of drama, as in sports—where the staging has the excitement of accident, and the third act curtain is the final whistle. Well-presented, as we shall see, it can achieve the pleasurable of most other kinds of entertainment; radio's unseen journalists, by virtue of their *subject matter alone*, are high up on the Hooper popularity ratings.

As to the paying customer—whatever the worth of statistics in so youthful and industry, figures eloquently attest to the fact that journalism is what paying customers seem to want, and like best. Over a two-year period at NBC in New York, sports and newsreels topped every other program type almost *every single week* in audience ratings—and the fact that the other program types were bad is merely weight to the statistics and the argument. Retailers report that set-buyers, particularly in the middle-income brackets, are buying their sets primarily—after novelty, of course,—to have sports and news brought into the living room, for free. The paying customers, without analyzing it, seem to be wanting television—just television. They can get radio from \$12.50 radios, and movies at the Palace.

One can't help wondering if—no matter how much Jack Warner says he's always wanted a newsreel—perhaps there wasn't a little hard-headed business logic mixed up with that desire, when Warner's bought Pathe News at a time when every other major newsreel

in the country was firing whole hunks of staff in order to break even, in their theatre releases.

## 4

WERE television programmers to reorient their policy toward a journalistic goal, and to borrow a phrase, attempt to construct a "living newspaper," where would they turn? Should they jettison anything and everything imitative? Would they keep their schedules loaded with nothing but "news"? The answer is rather simple. They should keep home television screens glowing with the motion of the world we live in, keeping in mind the dangers of trying to visualize something radio can do better, and the appeal of keeping reality as reality in terms of sight. They would include home economics as well as basketball, stock quotations along with the speeches of a bigwig Waldorf dinner. And, of course, they would do everything in terms of cheapness; expensive journalism like the March of Time, however correctly it pursues what the paying customers seem to want, runs the risk of biting off more than the budgets can chew, with—once more—the risk of comparison. And at long last, it is precisely here that the film writer appears in the scene. He provides cheapness and quality together.

Let's look at a journalistic schedule for a moment. Live sports events, far and away the belle of the ball . . . in and etc. etc.

The quick-moving kaleidoscope of the journalistic motion picture camera, with its infinite range, its action and mobility, its endless choice of subject matter, more fully exploits the visual potentialities of the medium than any other kind of television journalism, except live transmissions. Alas, live television is limited. Confined by transmission range and ponderous relay equipment and high line voltage, the live television camera can't travel far away from home base. The movie camera, however, can record the reality of any spot on earth where there is daylight—and fortunately, there are still a great many such spots still left us, however temporarily.

Even more important, film journalism can entertain, a quality vital for sponsorship. (Cue the film writer: it's almost time for his entrance.) Like fiction, film journalism can be dramatic, comic, exciting, and provoking. Yet it can also fulfill that vital condition of cheapness which we've seen is the straw on the sponsor's back.

## 5

ENTER: the film writer, with his literary tools to make films pleasurable and entertaining.

Enter: the film writing technique, with its capacity



to produce motion pictures at one-tenth the cost of the screen writing technique.

For simplicity's sake, let's call the conventional technique of producing pictures "the screen writing technique" — involving script, breakdown, directed scene-by-scene shooting, editing, and dubbing. Sponsors long ago learned how very much more this technique costs than live television does, with a quality of difference in no wise proportionate to the cost difference, if even evident.

Yet, ironically, sponsors have wanted film, because it can bypass the fabulous costs of electronically networking a program, simply by duping and mailing to each participating station, including stations not reachable by network yet. Film requires no costly studio rehearsal in the station or network. A film produced at a cost comparable to that of a television production would, in final reckoning, be far cheaper because of its savings in transmission charges. That's where film journalism, utilizing the film writing technique, shows its cheery head. It is just that. Cost-wise, it beats the screen writing technique hollow.

The film writer requires that a cameraman go out and shoot a story without screenplay or treatment or scene list and send it in. Then he takes over, fashioning from the footage a full-fledged screen production. Sailing blithely between the Scylla of film's attractively low transmission costs and the Charybdis of screen-writing's formidable production costs, he eliminates sets, actors, directors, makeup men, costumers, grips, electricians, script clerks, technical directors, and usually sound men, for with rare exceptions, his film was shot silent, outdoors. The vital IATSE Cameramen's Union permits a single cameraman, at a wage 35% under all "production" cameramen, to shoot "news-reel" without assistant, whereas even for silent "production," while paid more, the cameraman must have at least one, and usually two or three assistants, plus sound crew, grips and electricians for sound.

Were a journalistic story to be produced by the screen writer's technique, let's say a silent film-plus-track story, were the cameraman to be handed an already-written script, and told to go out and shoot that script, scene by scene, set-up by set-up, not only would the IATSE rate the story as "production" immediately, and require the hiring of many additional hands, but—and this is a vital difference in technique—a director would be required to interpret what the screen writer wanted to translate into film. Incidentally, it would take a good deal longer to shoot, and edit.

The story above, shot with screenplay, would cost about one-seventh as much to make if the film writing technique were employed. Once finished—if the film

writer is really good—the two techniques would end up on the screen with surprising similarity. But, and it bears repetition, the film writer must be able to write like an angel. For the screen writer's job is *cinematic*: he may request film to enrich his story. The film writer is denied the chance to request. He takes what he gets, and what he lacks in film, he must supply by his commentary and story-sense. His job is *literary*. He, and he alone, must carry the brunt of the cost difference. His words, as we shall show, must paint the pictures which the cameraman didn't shoot. His literary tricks keep the audience from realizing that they are hearing scenes instead of seeing them. He has become the director, but he must direct after the film has reached the cutting room. With his script, he must make the film perform like an actor, in the scenes his words create.

There are a great many in the business of film journalism today—and that includes everybody from the shoestring travelogue producers up through newsreels, documentaries, information films, and in fact anything on film which is not basically fictional or instructive—who would deny categorically that a writer can be given such immense responsibility and come up with a good show. There are those of the Picture Is All school, who say that no film can be better than its pictorial content, that the best commentary is a minimal captioning. There are those of the Complicated Film school who would argue that the job of film journalism is to prove or explore an area of fact, or culture, and must be shot so as best to illustrate the ideas. Most cameramen would insist that they are primarily responsible for the worth of a production, and not the commentary writer. Many cutters would contend that without their skill in editing film, the writer is helpless.

## 6

IT is the controversial contention of this article that although—obviously—good camera work and good editing help enormously, that although it would be nice to use the screenplay technique, and infinitely easier, the economics of television demand a highly-skilled, highly imaginative and creative writer who with minimum help from cutter and cameraman can produce film journalism of a very high quality. It is also the contention of this article that such writers can succeed in answering television's demands, with ideas from skillful typewriters instead of the screen, and rather than merely answering the challenge can beat it, master it and come out with productions as good as, and often better than, those of their screen writing colleagues. Only one condition is postulated: a talented, educated writer.

Probably, the film writer will be working for a network or a newsreel-package agency, into which, each week, will pour thousands of feet from staff cameramen around the country or the world. Unfortunately, his chances of getting much quality from his cameramen are still rather poor. The men called "Newsreel" cameramen today, men brought up to tell a story with their camera with no direction or suggestion other than time and place to cover, tend to be uncreative journeymen, who differ widely from their ASC colleagues in Hollywood.

They tend to be happiest when shooting a bathing beauty contest or bike race; their "feel" for journalism beyond the obvious—the strange, wonderful little off-the-beaten-track shots, twenty feet of which can do more to tell a story than a reel of photographic clichés—tends to fall into the same talent level as that of their newsreel-writer colleagues. And perhaps most sad to relate, their New York local—where most newsreel men come from, is a violently closed, nepotistic organization to which some of the finest documentary cameramen in the world are denied admission. They acknowledgedly don't like "arty" cameramen in the "newsreel" game; their business manager told me that the arty boys "tend to be foreigners, and reds."

Still, regardless how trite their coverage, they are expert technicians, and always send in a full story, complete with beginning, middle, end, and cutaways a-plenty. Good or bad, they can shoot as many as fifteen journalistic stories a week if so assigned. As television's demands for newsreel cameramen increases, perhaps the union will loosen its rigid membership rules, and new blood will bring in a more sensitive type of man. Until then, however, the importance of the film writer will necessarily be much greater in producing the quality whole.

In the film-writing technique, the editor has little chance to be of more than technical aid to his director-writer. Rarely does the uncut film offer much chance for ingenuity with scissors: there is seldom a retake, two different angles to choose from, or choice of close or medium shots. And the editor soon learns that the pictorial build, the problems of length, sequence, and pace, must be the domain of the film writer, who must use the film, as we said, as an actor in the scenes his script will build.

Once shot and cut—and usually the first cut will be the last, with a minor change or two—the editor hands the film writer a "spot sheet," listing the scenes in the story, and the content and length of each. From there on in, the film writing technique goes to work.

Off of that spot sheet must come a cinematic story, which up to now is merely film.

## 7

UNTIL now, the process has been almost identical to that used by any of the major newsreels. But our film writer is writing for television, for a sponsored production, and not for the highly uncompetitive newsreels, any one of which is in quality no whit different than its rival (the new Warner-Pathe is an encouraging exception). Therefore, as we've seen, he knows that it is the major job of his script to make the screen—the home-screen—entertain, and have audience-pulling power. It is another salient and primary function of his technique: he is writing for a Hooper.

FOR the sake of emphasizing this very vital point, let's digress for a moment to a writer who is also writing a script for a sponsor, for a commercial film. He will employ the screen-writing technique. For he has been hired by, say, the Piston Ring King to dramatize the impact of piston rings on 20th century culture. His script's job is to construct a cinematic vehicle which pictorializes each of the 122 reasons for piston rings in a free enterprise society. More important, his script's job is to titillate the hell out of the piston ring man personally. He has little interest in audience; he wants another contract.

By extreme contrast, the piston ring man who has contracted for television time in which to air the work of the film writer, wants a good *show* which set-owners will turn to, to which he can *append* his sales blurb. To titillate his sponsor, the film writer must do it via the audience, and the resulting Hooper. His script must be entertaining; it has nothing whatsoever to do with pistons, for the advertising agency is fretting about the commercials anyhow. The film writer, then, instead of being the hack journalist of the newsreels, and the cinematic journeyman of the commercial film, must be a showman, worried about box-office. Though he must do his journalistic and cinematic job well, it's the way in which he dresses his film up, and makes the finished job a glistening, provoking vehicle of sight and sound, which counts in the Hooper boxoffice tally.

An earlier reference to a *Time* editor was not random. In Luce's highly remunerative conception of journalism, the writer is a performer; there are reporters and researchers to worry out the facts and figures and check the final copy for error. The writers are there simply for showmanship. They dress facts up in velvet pantaloons, studded with provocative and annoying rhinestones. And whether you like it or not, the news shudders on the page with its *Timestyle*. Its readers—in the income bracket which will for many



## THE SCREEN WRITER

long years to come comprise the vast majority of television set-owners—like it. That pseudo-brilliance, combined with indefatigably thorough fact-finding, has proved excellent journalism. It sells a million and a half copies every week.

*March of Time*, interestingly, can afford to use the screenplay technique more often by far than the film writing technique, and in my opinion often suffers thereby: in prosaically illustrating the commentary, the screen often jumps around wildly and disorients the audience. As we shall see, this isn't likely in film writing. Nevertheless, the MOT commentary utilizes the ululating Lucian prose, and delivers it in the unbearably identifiable sonority of Van Voorhees, its announcer.

The film writer, however, must go *March of Time* one better, and do it all alone. He must stud up his commentary with rhinestones and an occasional zircon, but, as we've seen, must also *utilize his skill with words to overcome what the screen lacks in information, subject matter, variety, interest, and meaning*. Denied the chance, except from a stock library, to request that such and such be shot to illustrate his most vital points, he must substitute verbal ingenuity for cinematic thoroughness. To do so, he needs to know instinctively or consciously how to handle every trick in the literary—not the cinematic—book: inversion, comedy, bathos, pathos, plants, suspense, gags and even character. It's a lot more possible than it sounds.

### 8

WHAT the film writing technique could do received a tremendous shot in the arm during the Second War. The OWI and the military services in America, the Grierson unit in Canada, the Ministry of Information in England, all found themselves with film on their hands, out of which they must make pictures. Capra's *Why We Fight* was put together out of already-shot film, for the most part. So were most of Grierson's *World In Action* series, the *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*, and innumerable documentaries like *True Glory*. True, their producers (who were very often writers like Philip Dunne and John Huston and Eric Ambler) often had hundreds of thousands of feet to work with. *True Glory* had millions. But each new production tried a new experiment in script utilization. The soundtrack jumped away from the pathetically inept flatness of the newsreel's captioning horizontality. Borrowing from some of the great pre-war documentaries, and adding new tricks, the commentary developed mightily as a *dramatic*, showman-like adjunct to the picture. One or more actors read the lines, sometimes in character, sometimes merely with that understanding of words which a fine actor

can boast over a mere announcer. Comedy was used. Blank verse was used.

The film writers doing this were pressed into war-time service from every branch of the writing profession. They were iconoclastic, and they experimented. Little by little, they found themselves dominating story content, and approach. Novelists and screen writers, short-story writers and non-fiction feature writers and playwrights—every kind of writer, in fact, except the impossible newsreel men who amusingly enough had been virtually the only pre-war documentary film writers—found themselves virtually in charge of their own productions, because the editors and producers had begun to realize that it was the only way to make good pictures. They had learned that poets make superb film writers. Sometimes these writers underestimated the power of the film and overestimated the power of their script, but in all, they provided tomorrow's television film writer with a fabulous wealth of proof of the validity of the film writing technique.

### 9

THE film writer staring at his spot sheet probably is wriggling uncomfortably, for he could write for long minutes about a sequence listed thereon as 31 seconds. It is iron confinement; he knows that exactly 31-seconds' worth of film is available and no more. He knows also that what he writes must *sound* as though it matches with the film, whether it does or not. He knows that 16 seconds from the start, where Secretary Marshall walks across the screen, he must be identified.

It's an odd quirk in the film writing technique that after a little practice, these restrictions cease to be throttling and become a psychological boon. As in a sonnet, writing to count demands constant ingenuity and restriction-hurdling creativity. Goethe said, "It is by having to work within limits that the true master shows his art," and it's true in film writing. Once the writer has become accustomed to the confinement of his spot sheet, he learns to stop worrying about the screen. Instead, he learns to make the screen describe what he wants to say! He has acquired a capacity to tell a story whose message can be quite independent of the film while technically following it very closely. It is the film writer's basic trick of technique: what we'll call "interpreting." Although the process of "interpreting" becomes subconscious after a while, it's really two processes, one journalistic, the other literary. The journalistic art is deciding how to angle a story, even before it's cut. The writer decides what meanings and significance are in the story, exactly as if he were about to sit down and write a slanted magazine piece or an editorial about it—utterly irrespective

of the film's pictorial capacity to help him get those meanings across. He sticks to it, too, regardless how far afield the pictorial story may roam.

In the 1947 issue of the *New Yorker*, Rebecca West did a piece on the Greenville lynching trial. Like film writing, it was interpretive, creative journalism; she read a subtle meaning into some of the obvious things she witnessed. Now let's assume that those obvious things she saw were recorded by a pedestrian cameraman, and are the film to which a film writer must add commentary. And we'll say the film writer decides to put the same message into his film, and pursue the same investigation of what was significant, as Miss West did in her article. (A screen writer would—as in *Ox-Bow Incident*—have to recreate it fictionally.)

Miss West's superb journalism, of course, was not limited to what an actual camera recorded. The length of each observation, the variety of the scenes her typewriter recorded, were as endless as she cared to make them. Our film writer's interpretation is restricted to the available film. And to get his angle across, he is forced to resort to purely literary tricks of technique whereby his commentary brings things to the screen which the film alone doesn't have. These tricks are the second part of the process of interpreting, in film writing. They're the literary part.

It's parenthetically interesting that in her Greenville reporting, Miss West speaks of a photographer she met who "should have been a novelist; he detects the significant characters and episodes in the welter of experience as an Indian guide sees game in the forest. . . ." Alas, as we've seen, the film writer's chances of having film shot by such a cameraman are small indeed, for usually, such men *are* novelists, and not photographers, particularly movie photographers. It's ten to one his story will be a string of clichés until the script is added, a meaningless, pedestrian reality of the obvious.

The literary trick he first uses, then, as he starts to create his script, is what for lack of better semantics we'll call symbolism. We'll say that he realizes immediately that he has no pictorialization of the squalid tragedy of the American South. Perhaps, however, from the back of his mind comes a flash of memory of Wolfe's magnificent rhapsody about southern courthouses in the *Hills Beyond*, wherein Wolfe—very much in the film-writing manner—interprets southern culture in terms of the southern courthouse.

Naturally, the prosaic cameraman shot plenty of footage of the courthouse, because it was where the trial was: that, to him, was news. But the film writer makes it a symbol of things not seen. He opens his story with an abnormally long sequence of it, which

his editor helps to make move visually. And then, *always speaking in terms of the courthouse, which we see on the screen*, he pours into it all the blights and sores of its moribund culture, and the agonies of a race denied legal justice by century-old inequities of a dead economy. The courthouse absorbs his words dramatically. We in the audience see the stark building come alive with evil history, exactly as we do in Miss West's prose piece of description. So far, we're one up on Miss West, because we're actually seeing the reality in photographs. What's more, by using the screen as symbol, the film writer has made it his servant. He has the ball, and this sequence is as good or bad as his script-writing.

Instead of one symbol, perhaps he wants—or is forced—to use many objects as one symbol. Miss West explored the kind of homes the few wealthy people had, the kind of homes the Negroes lived in, the kind of homes wherein poor white and negroes lived side by side. This never occurred to our cameraman—and oddly, perhaps it's good it didn't. The symbols are more exciting. Of course the cameraman got a great many close-ups of Greenville citizens. So, the film writer interprets. The faces become the town, the physical town. While we *look* at kind and unkind faces, white and black, we *hear* the makeup of the town, hear how this man lives, where that man lives, and perhaps why. The synthesis is perhaps more exciting than visual documentation.

The film writer using this "symbol" technique has a never-ending challenge to his ingenuity in making words give visible things a new dimension. A sailor in Central Park can echo a battleship, a battle, his home town, his dreams, his girl, or even his car, or dog, without disorienting the audience in any way, for the film writer always remembers his technical allegiance to the film which has become his servant, and always focusses on the sailor himself. He must discuss the battleship *through* the sailor. He must discuss the tragedy of the South *through* the courthouse, the visible thing. He uses the words "courthouse," "justice" or "law" frequently. He perhaps writes "below these 19th century eaves ebbed the muddy tide of something that was sick, and dying, and refused to die . . ." Perhaps he says, "Inside these columns was . . .," or, "Beyond these faded pillars lay . . ." He clings to what we see.

He discusses the Jim-Crow built town *through* the people, saying, "to old Jeb Detters, the streets of his home town were no different than any other, but last week . . .," or "Ma Dides walked listlessly from her unpainted front porch (unseen on the screen) six blocks each morning to cross this square (seen) before Weaver's store, to collect her washing," or over to



the local bigshot's face, "Perhaps banker Phelps never stopped to think that his small town was . . ." and so on.

The film writer might say that as he writes he hangs his script to the scenes of his film as if tied by occasional pieces of string to the sprocket holes. It is *his* script, not the film's. He owns and originated it. Its interpretation is his, and it hangs together by itself as a piece of literate writing. True, he has had to twist and invert sentences so they fit the screen's demands, or has written his exposition backwards because that's the way the film demands it. Yet quite apart from the screen it so closely follows, it is a whole of dramatic, journalistic prose, which is entertaining.

One of the most prevalent uses of film in television film journalism today—while widespread "news" footage for television is still largely available—is stock footage. And it will figure very largely in the film writing of tomorrow, too. It is sometimes incredible what a talented film writer can do with—say—mid-war scenes of London while describing a recent unpictorial food crisis in Britain. More often than not, he won't have a chance to utilize his stock footage with more than adequacy, but sometimes, careful selection of symbolic footage can considerably enhance an effect he's working toward. And no matter how unexciting the footage, his interpretive skills of technique can *always* read into dated pictorial material the stuff of current interest. What's more, that's extremely fortunate, because for quite a while to come, they probably will have to.

### 10

**O**FTEN, as the writer starts out with the technique, he'll find it's not so easy to acquire the knack of writing to footage. He'll find his words and information either anticipate the screen, or lag behind it, and don't quite jibe. He learns that when this happens, his audience becomes confused and dis-oriented, and most important, conscious of his writing. Once he has really mastered his writing to count, and his interpretive tricks, with his script fitting the film perfectly, he finds he can talk of things a thousand miles away without forcing his audience consciously to leave the pictorial scene.

The more experience he gets, the more literary tricks he picks up, with which to stud his script with "rhinestones." He'll learn the importance of pictorial build, and how to achieve it in synchronization with script build. He'll learn the feeling of when to underwrite and when to purple the hell out of it. He'll learn the value of silence when the screen is exciting. He'll learn how and when to depend on music for build, and when to avoid it. He'll learn when to use char-

acter, when to use comedy, when to use two voices, or a woman's voice. But all the time, day in and day out, he'll be "writing," as creative people write. He's got to. He's now in show business.

In a preface to the collection of his magnificent *Eternal Light* radio programs, Morton Wishengrad says "Narration is one opportunity for 'good writing'; not pretentious writing . . . but writing that is sensitive to the rhythms of speech and the texture of words. The narrative form . . . allows poetry, without creating a wall of embarrassment between the listener and the narrator. Poetic dialogue always seems contrived and mannered, but poetic narrative, as Archibald Macleish and Stephen Vincent Benet proved, can be as natural . . . as color is to painting."

Add to Mr. Wishengrad's description a reel of film, which, through controlled technique becomes the servant of the narrative, and this is the palette of the film writer, whose "colors" are the cinders and slapstick of reality, beyond the dangers of lipsticked distortion in attempted re-creation.

The world has always seemed able to find an endless supply of oddly variegated men and women who will work ridiculous hours at ridiculous wages under ridiculous pressures just so that they can stick their noses into the way we all of us live and die. If they're lucky, they may be able to take a crack at deciding what it all adds up to. They're people who seem to find solace for their lack of \$1500 a week in their profession's first-hand contact with reality; they're usually essentially young. And they're the journalists, who seem to like observing the foibles of humanity as they are; they're the day by day historians, the chroniclers of their time.

Side by side with their cameramen and cutters, the film writers will join the ranks of journalists, and if the logic of the Little Punchie people begins to dominate the television industry, they will be the key artists of their medium. Yet they will—through economic, technical, and social pressures—have to be a whole new genus of the species. Television demands of them that they synthesize fact and showmanlike art, that they be essentially creative.

Most important of all, television offers its film-writing journalists what in all likelihood will become the most powerful medium of communication ever devised. By many hundred per cent more forcefully than in radio, by many hundred per cent more intimately than in movies—yes, or even *Time*—the writers who inherit television journalism can describe and interpret an aching, moulting world as it is, as it really, honestly is. They have a staggering responsibility, these film writers. Let us hope they will be staggeringly responsible.

# The Corporate Author:

## An Essay in Literary Criticism

DAVID CHANDLER

SWG member DAVID CHANDLER contributed a widely quoted article, *Love In Hopewell*, to the October issue of *The Screen Writer*. In the present article he examines an unusual phase of the literary art as practiced in Hollywood.

THE preliminary researches conducted in the pages of this journal by Messrs. Kibbee and Diamond<sup>(1)</sup> seem to me to constitute an invaluable breaking of new ground. Their relentless analysis of the basic elements of the modern screen play is, in its own way, a discovery as important as that of digestible sausage casing or Chux. Future students of the nature of the craft will owe them a debt of gratitude and it is to be hoped that their spadework will not be lost, but that their investigations will be further pursued.

My own theory, however, is that there is another, and as yet still untried, technique for analyzing the contemporary screenplay. Every screen writer knows that when he signs his contract with the studio which employs him, for no matter how long or short a term, he signs away at the same time all auctorial rights and invests the corporation with the right to designate itself sole Author of all literary material. Thus we have arrived at the stage where various producing corporations, whatever other corporate qualities they may possess, have also become prodigious writers and authors, each with an immense literary *corpus* behind it which would make the combined output of Trollope, Dickens, Thackeray, Dumas *père* and *fils* and Ben Ames Williams seem like the veriest occasional jottings of a lazy poetaster. It is my belief that just as it is possible to examine the collected works of any of these writers and arrive at an estimate of the author, his philosophy, his relationship to his world and time as reflected in his attitude toward his characters and the dominant philosophies of his period, so it is possible similarly to examine the collected works of any Corporate Author, say, the Author Loews Inc., or the Author Vanguard Pictures Inc., and to arrive at an overall

estimate such as one might reach if he were considering Samuel Richardson or Henry Fielding.

Naturally a venture in literary criticism like this is fraught with difficulties for the pioneer. Here is a new group of writers, dating only from the twentieth century, lacking conventional biography, collected letters, or actual *being*<sup>(2)</sup> from which it would be possible for the student to initiate his survey. The authors of the Bible, the Babylonian Talmud, the Koran, Beowulf, the Odyssey and the Iliad, similarly lacked individual physical being and are without biography or letters; but there is this difference: today the actual existence of the Corporate Author has the sanction of the laws and courts of the Republic. The scribe of Ecclesiastes never had to contend with this kind of thing.

So, in examining the collected works of any Corporate Author we face a task of almost pure literary criticism. One could never do the kind of thing to a Corporate Author that Amy Lowell did to John Keats. Nor could one draw inspiration for a way of life out of such a writer's biography the way scores of misled individuals have done from the lives of Byron, Shelley and Hemingway. The critic himself has nothing to go on but the Author's output.<sup>(3)</sup>

Tentatively, then, and just to indicate to future students the direction our studies will have to take, the present essay will attempt to outline some avenues of investigation in discovering the individuality of the Corporate Author. Reluctantly I shall have to leave to later critics the tasks of correlating each Author

(2) Details of corporate travail, birth and health can easily be found in periodicals like *Fortune* and in continuing business studies like *Poor's*, not to mention governmental reports and surveys, but they do not help us in our present task which is largely literary in scope.

(3) Discussions of the predilections, tastes and biographies of the individuals who give direction to the Corporate Author also prove of little value to the critic, since these individuals tend to change so frequently, vary status so often, differ in authority among themselves and themselves have no being outside of the Corporate Entity.

(1) Kibbee, Roland: *Two Men on a Vehicle*, Vol. 1, No. 7, December 1945; Kibbee, Roland: *Stop Me If You Wrote This Before*, Vol. 2, No. 12, May 1947; Diamond, I. A. L.: *Darling, You Mean . . . ?*, Vol. 3, No. 4, September 1947.



to his Time and Place, the stresses and strains that have made his Work what it is. I limit myself only to proving that on close inspection each Author has a little character all his own.

JUST as it comes as something of a surprise to realize that *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* were written during a period of social travail yet show in their pages nothing of this, so one is given something of a start when he becomes aware that although our Corporate Authors have done most of their work and have reached maturity during a period embracing two world wars, two attempts at creating a mechanism for settling international conflicts, a period shaken by the consequences attendant on the discovery of atomic power, not to mention the consequences attendant on the discovery of the depths of human bestiality as evidenced by the creation of a new international tribunal to name and punish a hitherto undreamed crime called Race Murder—just as the problems of *her* day find little or no reflection in Jane Austen, so our problems find little or no reflection in the work of the Corporate Author. Miss Austen's concern is with the niceties of behavior; the Corporate Author deals with whether the moment is proper for two characters to embrace and kiss.<sup>(4)</sup>

Our Corporate Authors, having found the few basic stories they prefer to tell, have gone their own way, as did Jane Austen, and have preferred to let the world go its own way. This gives their work a curious but withal charming view of the world, a world like that of Hansel and Gretel in which witches lie in wait for errant boys and girls to make them into gingerbread but in which through their ineptness the witches inevitably end up in their own ovens. One Corporate Author, for example, moves his characters always in attractive rooms and houses, no matter what their economic status. The shopgirl always has a view of the Queensboro Bridge and the sharecropper's dwelling excites admiration in the breast of every lover of early Americana. In a changing world such things become one of life's precious stable factors.

But having found the Story upon which they all agree,<sup>(5)</sup> the Corporate Authors have gone their separate

ways. Each Author strives to handle the same material, the identical story, in his own way. Therein lies the difference among them. To one Author womanhood is a sacred vessel, above suspicion, capable perhaps of the doubt and vacillation upon which Plot depends, but only for the time being: in the long run the sacred vessel remains unbroken, unscarred, indeed unchipped, and the wiser and truer for her moment of stress. To another Author, however, womanhood divides into two classes: one, dressed in the costliest *couture*, moving everywhere with an air of limitless wealth, is Woman Frustrate, incapable of winning or holding her man against the second class woman, poor, talented, sacrificing, understanding, but gifted with a physical beauty inevitably beyond the capabilities of anyone born in the first class.

One Corporate Author regards his heroes<sup>(6)</sup> as broad-shouldered, silent, successful men capable of anything with the right woman at their side and if the winning of the goal also means the winning of her love.<sup>(7)</sup> Another Author, however, prefers his heroes not to be so much of a piece. The hero's introduction is always vaguely unpleasant. He does not admire the Old School or the Outfit, he would break with Tradition, he is rude, especially to the heroine when he first meets her. But always at the proper moment this Author's hero fits into the mold: he learns, he believes, and of course, having changed forever, he wins possession of the girl.

Another place where the Corporate Authors differ is in their handling of children. The collected works of the Author Loews Inc., for example, are testament to its unvarying affection for all human beings with undeveloped secondary sex characters. His apparently genuine love for children is evident in every work. His children are mischievous but charming; they are gay, never cruel; they are ambitious, but only insofar as it involves staging school plays or benefit performances. They would never be mean or neurotic.<sup>(8)</sup> Children appear in all this Author's works; no writer in history has so many classroom scenes, so many children's voices lifted in dissonant unison, so much innocent merriment, unconfined gaiety.

(4) Where the Corporate Author has dealt with the two wars and in at least one attempt to show the drama of nuclear fission, he has moved unsurely, preferring to deal with this *terra incognita* in familiar, conventional terms, as if to deprive it of any impact. Mr. Diamond, *op. cit.*, *supra*, calls attention to the tense pre-combat moment when the private soldier says, "It's quiet," and the experienced sergeant replies, "Yeah, too quiet," and keenly points out the derivation of this cliché from the old Western picture. A good example of how a Corporate Author goes to the past to write of the present.

(5) One would like to call it The American Dream, but Herbert Croly's ghost would writhe undeservingly.

(6) By common usage Corporate Authors do not employ ancient Aristotelian terms like protagonist and antagonist, etc., but use a vocabulary of their own. I leave this to the students of linguistics.

(7) All Corporate Authors regard the winning of anything *without* love as so much ashes in the mouth.

(8) A world such as that pictured in Miss Hellman's *The Children's Hour* would be utterly outside this Author's interest, it would be safe to speculate. One can venture the opinion that even being convinced of its existence by a battery of learned psychologists this Author would prefer to let others handle it as they liked, but would himself leave it strictly alone.

But if one Author's affection for the young is unbounding, another Author takes an even more distressing attitude toward children. This Author arrogates to children a wisdom far beyond the powers of mere adults.<sup>(9)</sup> Do the grownups, petty, troubled, suspicious of each other, arrive at a point where nothing can quiet their fears or allay their suspicions? This Author believes the Child will soon set matters right. Misunderstanding will be cleared up and love will burst into flower. One is hard put to discover in this Author's work where a child<sup>(10)</sup> has not proved to have wisdom and insight superior to any of his adult characters.

A FEW more hints and later students of the Corporate Authors will have to be on their own. What of the Authors' attitude toward money and the accumulation of wealth? To one it is the sum and purpose of existence. People murder and divorce on its account. (This gives the works of this particular Author a semblance of Reality which other Authors envy or detest.) To another it ranks with Love, which means that without it all is pointless and purposeless. Merely to say money and wealth rank with Love is to give it a position in the hierarchy of values common to all Corporate Authors of the highest importance. Yet another Author, professedly venerating the same hierarchy of values, inevitably represents Money as Evil. The wealthy girl always fails to win the square-chinned hero; her home life is dull, futile and she dreams of leaving it. She must marry in her class, which is to say she must marry badly. She knows that so long as she suffers the burden of Wealth she has no chance of finding Love. Another Author, on the other hand—and he is not alone in this—regards the possession of wealth on the part of a man as a sign of weakness: the rich young man, pressing his hopeless suit for the heroine, tends to be rather stupid, insipid and resigned to going his own way after the heroine, though touched by his qualities of kindness and understanding, chooses to plight her troth to the unmoneyed hero.

Still, most Corporate Authors actually do not regard wealth quite so highly as they profess. No family is ever so poor that its dwelling is not warm, pleasant and comfortable. No Mother, burdened with whatever

problems, fails to open the oven without discovering a roast or a fowl calculated to set millions of mouths to watering. In the face of this inevitable domestic bliss, a critic may inquire why the Authors regard the struggle for wealth and security as so important? This is a confusion they have not worked out and which, again, I must leave to future students.

What are all these people struggling against? Always Evil must be personified. If it is a System<sup>(11)</sup> it must always come garbed as a Man or Woman. There are various theories, beside the point here, on why this System must be so sharply drawn, so individualized. But the fact is that those who use Villains make them from a single piece of cloth. No one is ever a villain in spite of himself. The villain who would run the railroad over the disputed acres never stops to offer a lump of sugar to a horse or pat a child on the head.<sup>(12)</sup> Interestingly enough, at least one Corporate Author regards Villains and other forms of Evil Personified as characters to be avoided. There is no Evil in this Author's pages. There is no Villain. People wander from the True Path because they are not well-informed or because they have Doubt, but sooner or later they return. This way everybody is happy, including Evil, which, of course, to put it on theological grounds, never having been encountered has never been vanquished.

A word as to working people and our present survey is finished. They do not generally appear in the output of the Corporate Authors, any more than they appear in Jane Austen. When they do have an unavoidable moment, they are always benign, content, highly individualistic and completely unconcerned about their collective status or economic condition. They are colorful cabbies, kindly patrolmen winking at youthful speculations, worldly wise gardeners, sympathetic bartenders, fruit vendors and bus drivers. Coal miners, steel workers, longshoremen and auto workers, not being in a position in their condition of employment to give help to the wandering heroine or hero, have not figured much in the collected works of the Corporate Authors.

I hope these tentative comments will serve to stimulate enthusiasm for a massive study of one Author at a time. I know I for one would put such a volume on the same shelf with Edmund Malone's *Life of Dryden*. More or less I cannot say.

(9) Query: Wouldn't someone of scholarly bent do well to prepare a monograph on this as a contemporary manifestation of Jean Jacques Rousseau and his ideas of the Happy Savage, etc?

(10) Or mother. It should be mentioned that all Authors regard the wisdom of mothers *per se* as beyond dispute. The theories of Mr. Philip Wylie have caused scarcely a ripple among the Corporate Authors.

(11) Naturally one means Railroad System or Banking System. Corporate Authors do not acknowledge the existence of any other Systems.

(12) Love of children is so sacred it is vouchsafed only those worthy of it. *Cf. supra*.





## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT: SHERIDAN GIBNEY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, GEORGE SEATON; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, F. HUGH HERBERT; 3RD VICE-PRESIDENT, DWIGHT TAYLOR; SECRETARY, ARTHUR SHEEKMAN; TREASURER, HARRY TUGEND. EXECUTIVE BOARD: ROBERT ARDREY, ART ARTHUR, STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY, CLAUDE BINYON, CHARLES BRACKETT, FRANK CAVETT, OLIVE COOPER, VALENTINE DAVIES, RICHARD ENGLISH, EVERETT FREEMAN, PAUL GANGELIN, ALBERT HACKETT, MILTON KRIMS, ERNEST PASCAL, LEONARD SPIGELGASS. COUNSEL, MORRIS E. COHN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALICE PENNEMAN.

## E D I T O R I A L

AT the top of this page are the names of the new officers and executive board of the Screen Writers' Guild. They were elected November 19 by the SWG membership. They face unusual responsibilities. They deserve cooperation and support, and freedom from the bickering and prejudice that act like sand in the gears of effective organization. They believe in the Guild, they have stood up for it in the past, and they are willing to sacrifice much time and energy for it in the years ahead. It must be assumed that anyone who runs successfully for SWG office understands that what we have in common as writers is immeasurably more important than any differences that may seem to divide us. The hope is that all members will share that understanding.

This issue of *The Screen Writer* is the last to be published under the direction of the Executive Board and Editorial Committee which finished their term of office on November 19. The outgoing Board and its various committees have worked hard trying to serve the Guild. Their successes and failures cannot be evaluated here. But a few words based on experience and observation may be permitted.

During the last few weeks the attack against our Guild has reached a new high in irresponsible stridency. Writers have been slandered individually and as a group; the effort to split and destroy the Guild was never more naked. It is perhaps a measure of the Guild's achievements in behalf of writers and for the creative integrity of the motion picture industry. It should have a solidifying effect on the internal structure of the organization.

It is a reminder that the Screen Writers' Guild does not exist in an economic or social vacuum. No organization formed to improve the working conditions of its members can ever stand aloof and remote above the battle, or escape into a nirvana of neutrality; least of all, an organization of writers.

**F**OURTEEN years ago the SWG in its present form was conceived in the midst of struggle. That was the beginning of the Roosevelt period, of the blue-eagled NRA, of new codes of working rules. Before that time writers in Hollywood had worked under conditions that now seem almost incredibly bad. As soon as the new SWG organized and began to fight for better conditions for screenwriters, the resistance to it also formed, most of it without but some of it within the SWG ranks.

In 1935 the Wagner Act reinforced the Guild. In the same year affiliation with the Authors' League of America was first planned. The proposal encountered the same kind of semi-hysterical opposition later encountered by the American Authors' Authority plan. A dissident organization was set up, known as the Screen Playwrights. On June 4, 1938, in an NLRB election, the SWG won the right to represent writers in the motion picture field. The vote was 271 to 57. An interim contract was signed with the producers. In May, 1942, the existing seven-year contract was signed.

In the meantime our nation found it impossible to remain neutral and above the world battle. When war came, 25 per cent of the SWG's membership went into the armed forces. The rest of the membership was deeply immersed in war activities. Throughout the war years our members gave their time, talent, money, and some gave their lives, to the winning of the war. We can be proud of our record in behalf of our nation. We need say nothing of the SWG record in behalf of writers. It speaks for itself, and in the efforts of those who would like to see the effectiveness of this writers' organization weakened or destroyed.

In 1945 the fighting stopped in Europe and Asia. But peace as we had thought of it did not come. Instead, tensions sharpened. Fears increased and multiplied; the free, tolerant climate of our beloved land changed. A smog of suspicion and doubt began to obscure an America that such a little time ago had been confident and unafraid. This miasma has thickened to the point where democracy may lose its way unless we regain our sight. Americans are recognizing now that this is not a normal thing; that much of it is a smoke screen being generated under forced draft by certain newspapers, politicians and powerful business groups who use it as a cover while they gain long-sought objectives—among them the Taft-Hartley Act. Another objective may be the abrogation of civil liberties, and the setting up of a system of policed opinion.

That is why the former Secretary of State James Byrnes the other day called sharply for an end to this hysteria, while there is yet time to end it. That is why President Truman's broadly representative Committee on Civil Liberties says: "The guaranteed rights of Americans were never in greater peril. We must build up our defenses against the forces of fear and hysteria that are undermining them."

**D**OES all this concern us as writers? We believe it more than concerns us. As writers who reach hundreds of millions of this world's people through the written word and the screened image, we believe it imposes an ineluctable



responsibility upon us if we want to keep our integrity, and keep our screen free.

This responsibility is primary and immediate. We can best meet it by acting together, by keeping our Guild strong and united, by meeting with all possible awareness and courage the issues that confront us.

Maintenance of civil liberties, resistance to the Hearstian proposals for a police censorship over books, the radio, and the screen, are not issues of political partisanship. They provide common ground for all Americans. As writers, we have a common stake in these broad issues and in the solution of our special problems of more creative control over material and greater rewards from it through licensing and better terms of employment.

Our Guild has survived many a crisis, met successfully many serious problems. We believe it will continue to do so, and go on to the full realization of the great potentialities inherent in it. For the sake of all screen writers, and of the industry in which they are the primary creative force, we believe it must do so. That must be the first consideration of all of us.



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(November 24, 1947)

Columbia—Louella MacFarlane; alternate, Edward Huebsch

MGM—Gladys Lehman; alternate, Anne Chapin; Sidney Boehm, Margaret Fitts.

Republic — Franklin Adreon; alternate, John K. Butler.

20th Century-Fox—Wanda Tuchok; alternate Richard Murphy.

Warner Brothers — James Webb; alternate, Ruth Brooks.

Paramount — Arthur Sheekman; alternate, Jesse Lasky, Jr.

Universal-International—Silvia Richards.

RKO—Geoffrey Homes.

## Election and Annual Meeting Report

At the November 19th membership meeting the new Officers and Executive Board were elected and have taken over administration of SWG affairs. In the election, 720 votes were cast, slightly below the record of 743 votes last year. Personnel of the new Administration is:

*President*

Sheridan Gibney

*1st V.P.*—George Seaton

*2nd V.P.*—F. Hugh Herbert

*3rd V.P.*—Dwight Taylor

*Secretary*

Arthur Sheekman

*Treasurer*

Harry Tugend

*Executive Board*

Robert Ardrey

Frank Cavett

Paul Gangelin

Art Arthur

Olive Cooper

Albert Hackett

Stephen Morehouse Avery

Valentine Davies

Milton Krims

Claude Binyon

Richard English

Ernest Pascal

Charles Brackett

Everett Freeman

Leonard Spigelgass

## Action on Resolutions

At the Nov. 19 annual meeting membership action was taken on several resolutions.

The following resolution was adopted, with only one vote being recorded against it:

*The House Committee on un-American Activities has called on the producers to discharge members of this Guild for reasons of political belief, thus seeking to establish a precedent which could endanger the livelihoods of all members of this Guild;*

*Now therefore, be it resolved: That this Guild hereby adopts a policy of resistance to discrimination in employment against any member of the Guild for his political beliefs or associations, provided such beliefs or associations are not in violation of any law, and that the membership hereby instructs its executive board to give immediate attention to the implementation of this resolution, including the appointment of a special*

*committee to deal specifically with the question of blacklist, whether veiled or direct, and with all cases of discrimination which may occur, and to keep the Guild advised on all matters relating to this resolution.*

With two votes recorded against it, the following resolution on political censorship was overwhelmingly approved by the membership:

*Whereas it became evident at the hearings of the House Committee on un-American Activities that one of its goals is to impose political censorship by intimidation and coercion on the motion picture screen; and*

*Whereas political censorship, direct or indirect, can only work to the professional and economic detriment of all screen writers;*

*Now Therefore Be It Resolved, That this Guild is opposed to all forms of political censorship; that it declares resistance to such censorship*

*to be a major function of the Guild; that the Executive Board appoint a special Committee on Censorship; that the membership be urged to supply this Committee on Censorship with documentary evidence of efforts to censor their work; that evidence of this sort, without revealing the names of individual writers, producers or studios be publicized to the membership and to the press.*

A resolution asking for the abolition of the House Committee on un-American Activities was amended and passed, as follows:

*That this Guild call upon the House of Representatives and each of its individual members to support H.R.46, introduced by Representative A. J. Sabath, which will abolish the House Committee on un-American Activities.*

The following resolution was adopted:

*That the Screen Writers' Guild up-*



holds the general stand taken by Emmet Lavery as the Guild's official spokesman before the Thomas Committee and commends his testimony as providing a fair and accurate reflection of majority Guild sentiment.

A second part of the same resolution, committing SWG membership to approval of policy recommendations by Emmet Lavery, retiring president, concerning SWG attitude and action with respect to

the Thomas committee hearings, was voted down by the membership.

Unanimous approval was given to the following resolution:

*That the Screen Writers' Guild expresses its warmest appreciation and gratitude to Emmet Lavery for his outstanding services to the Guild during the three trying years in which he has served as Guild President.*

An amended resolution condemning the activities of the Motion Picture Alliance was adopted. The amended resolution follows:

*The Screen Writers' Guild specifically condemns the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals for its role in promoting and furthering the anti-Guild and anti-Industry aims of the Thomas Committee.*

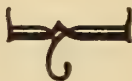
## SWG Credit Arbitration Panel

November 19, 1947, to November, 1948

Robert Andrews  
Lee Atlas  
Graham Baker  
Melville Baker  
Ben Barzman  
Al Beich  
A. I. Bezzerides  
Michael Blankfort  
Edwin Blum  
Dewitt Bodeen  
Sidney Boehm  
Marvin Borowsky  
Mortimer Braus  
Ruth Brooks  
Elizabeth Burbridge  
W. R. Burnett  
Jerry Cady  
Roy Chanslor  
Harry Clork  
Richard Collins  
Morgan Cox  
I. A. L. Diamond  
Howard Dimsdale  
Jay Dratler  
Robert Ellis  
Guy Endore  
Anne Froelich  
Paul Gangelin  
Erwin Gelsey  
Frank Gill, Jr.  
Harold Goldman  
Howard J. Green  
Eve Greene  
Frank Gruber

Margaret Gruen  
Dorothy Hannah  
Robert Harari  
Edmund Hartman  
Jack Henley  
David Hertz  
Leonard Hoffman  
Michael Hogan  
Arthur Horman  
Lionel Houser  
Dick Irving Hyland  
Boris Ingster  
Ed James  
Polly James  
Paul Jarrico  
Dorothy Kingsley  
Frederick Kohner  
Ring Lardner, Jr.  
John Larkin  
Jesse Lasky, Jr.  
S. K. Lauren  
Connie Lee  
Leonard Lee  
Robert Lees  
Gladys Lehman  
Isobel Lennart  
Melvin Levy  
Herbert Clyde Lewis  
Eugene Ling  
Lee Loeb  
Helen Logan  
Stephen Longstreet  
William Ludwig  
Dane Lussier

Richard Macaulay  
Louella MacFarlane  
Mary McCall, Jr.  
Winston Miller  
Bertram Millhauser  
Peter Milne  
Jack Natteford  
Sloan Nibley  
Jo Pagano  
Frank Partos  
Ernest Pascal  
John Paxton  
Fred Rinaldo  
Allen Rivkin  
Marguerite Roberts  
Wells Root  
Bradford Ropes  
Waldo Salt  
Oscar Saul  
Mel Shavelson  
Hal Smith  
Earle Snell  
Lynn Starling  
Francis Swann  
Dwight Taylor  
Wanda Tuchock  
Catherine Turney  
Malvin Wald  
Luci Ward  
Thelma Robinson Watson  
M. Coates Webster  
Brenda Weisberg  
George Wells



## Correspondence

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)  
could not be seen in commercial circuits goes back to the early twenties and to the French movie critic Louis Dellus, the man who introduced Charles Chaplin to France, and popu-

larized American movies in his magazine *Ciné*. He and his friends started private showings of pictures which for political or artistic reasons, were not shown in regular theaters. The success of his club and others like it

was proven by the opening of several commercial houses, similar to the little New York theaters which specialize in arty and foreign movies.

Around 1935 the need for something beyond that was evident. Old

silent movies could no longer be seen anywhere and some of the screen masterpieces would have been destroyed if it had not been for the creation of the "*cinemathèque*". M. Langlois created the French one, on the same basis as the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art and we must be grateful to him for having preserved some invaluable prints.

After the war the cine-clubs experienced an extraordinary boom. Motion picture making has always been considered in France more of an art than as a business. Movie reviews in newspapers are sometimes more highbrow than reviews of any other form of art, painting or music. Numbers of books and magazines discussing the theories and the technique of the Cinema are being published daily. It is only natural that aesthetes and technicians should have wanted to see the material upon which they carry their studies. But the interest in out-of-the-run movies spread beyond that group. One reason is that during five years of German or German-inspired movies the French people felt frustrated and turned toward any film they could lay their hands upon. During those bad years, such literary eminences as Andre Gide and Jean-Paul Sartre themselves lectured on the subject of motion pictures and contributed to spreading their popularity. Knowing their movie classics is almost as much a cultural need for the French as having read Moliere.

The cine-clubs answer that need. As a matter of fact, one of Langlois's pet projects is to start motion picture education in the schools. Children should be taught what great movies are, just as they are taught what great literature or great paintings are. Unfortunately, perhaps motion picture making is too young an art, the number of films which can be shown to children is limited. But the project will get under way pretty soon. In the meantime only adults get educated.

One of the main points of that education is to develop the public's taste. Seeing old masterpieces necessarily brings a comparison with the products of today. The cine clubs are for the motion pictures what the repertory theater is for the legitimate stage. However they do not come into direct competition with commercial houses: people who are looking for an en-

tertaining evening and come to the cine-clubs are disappointed: the technique has varied so considerably during the last twenty-five years, that unless one is prepared to look for certain points in old movies, one doesn't enjoy them as sheer entertainment. Most of the clubs add to their programs a discussion of the pictures to be shown and one of the troubles of the clubs is to have enough well-informed members to guide those discussions, and show the public what is good.

As it is, cine-clubs, instead of competing with commercial movies, increase the number of spectators. Those groups, scattered as they are in every walk of life, spread the interest in movies, modern as well as old. And this is a valuable influence in France.

---

The Executive Board of the SWG to whom RICHARD G. HUBLER submitted the communication below, directed its publication here:

Any examination of the functioning of the Thomas committee must operate on two counts:

The *purpose* of the committee;

The *procedure* of the committee.

The purpose of the Thomas group is laudable. That is to say, it is a legal procedure in use for the past 158 years directed at the business of supplying information to Congress direct from the citizens of the United States. No one can say whether or not it is constitutional beyond personal opinion. That decision is a matter for the courts.

The procedure of the Thomas investigators, however, has an obvious and undeniable tendency to restrict the rights of citizens. That is, to use a bastard process of court procedure without the safeguards generally given such proceedings. The witnesses, no matter what their testimony, are immune from prosecution from libel; slander and misconcept have been widespread; there has been no equity in the presentations; there has been no cross-examination, no evidence worthy of the name. The largest part of the Thomas efforts have been devoted to hearsay and to rumor, which, once set abroad, are almost impossible to combat.

Whether or not this affects Hollywood is a minor concern compared with the restriction of the civil liberties of individuals. Many who are themselves in favor of the Thomas *ex officio* condem-

nations are complaining about "rights" when they really mean "profits."

In this sense, then, the Thomas committee must be judged as an evil.

Nevertheless, the system of Congressional committees may not be judged on the same basis. In a hearing fairly conducted the good of the whole has been overwhelming; the investigation of war profits, racial prejudice, cartels, and the like have all borne good fruit. The Thomas committee, in procedure and effect, has damaged all Congressional committee prestige—but it should not obscure the fact of their usefulness to democracy at large.

The Communists—like the Fascists—have been using the tactics of the Thomas committee to smoke-screen their own vicious tendencies. Those who believe in democracy and civil liberties know that Communism stands for exactly the opposite. Those who condemn the Thomas committee must, on exactly the same grounds, condemn Communism as being destructive in precisely the same way. To say that the Communist Party is a political party in the same sense as the Democrats and Republicans is, of course, the most malicious kind of nonsense. The Communists—as Joe Curran, Walter Reuther, and others have found out—owe their allegiance to another system, another country, another tyranny in principle and practice. Other countries—Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria—have found this out. Any student of Communism knows the issue. In the words of Alexander Woolcott, in the face of the facts, the man who denies this is "either a knave or a fool."

The United States, as a hopefully practicing democracy, owes it to itself to protect its institutions against dictatorship of either the Left or Right. As Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., pointed out in a recent issue of the *New York Times*, capitalism is not a sacrosanct system—but the rights of democracy are. To quote Schlesinger, "the only test of disloyalty is superior loyalty to another country." Section III, paragraph three, of the Constitution defines treason as offering aid or comfort to an enemy.

If Communists are no more than Republicans or Democrats, why then do they cry "wolf, wolf," at admitting their affiliation? The function of their philosophy has been defined by the Attorney General of the United States as dedicated to the destruction of democracy and is illustrated in four colors by what hap-



pened and is happening in the USSR and in other countries under her domination. Communists, according to Prime Minister Attlee, spied in England under the banner of the English Communist Party even during the war when the USSR was supposedly an ally of the British. Instances could be multiplied.

To use the hearings of the Thomas committee as a cover for their own activities against the government which allows them the very liberties which they abuse and would do away with is, to the right-minded, as abominable as the procedures of that committee which agree with the principles of Communist philosophy.

In sum, the purpose of the Thomas committee is laudable. Any defense of democracy is laudable. The procedure of the Thomas committee is deplorable. Any offense against democracy is deplorable, deplorable because it is an offense against the basic rights of man—as Communism is an offense against the basic rights of man.

The final point is that the Communists are a danger to democracy. The Thomas committee has muddled the job and confused the issue by its undemocratic actions. But the job should and must be done. The Communists must be recognized as fundamentally foreign agents; spies; provocateurs; potential destroyers of human liberty and individual dignity. That is sufficient if it is done. Again to quote Schlesinger, "every government has the right to defend itself," and none has a better right than that of the United States.

To that end, the procedure of the Thomas committee must be damned. But also, to that end, the purpose of the Thomas committee must be continued.

—RICHARD G. HUBLER

From RICHARD MACAULAY to the Editor of *The Screen Writer*.

I understand that you are running a special section of *The Screen Writer* having to do with the current difficulties of individuals in the Guild with the United States Government. You are represented to have said that in this section,

you wished to run divergent viewpoints. Enclosed find mine:

The Marxists of the Screen Writers' Guild, like Marxists everywhere, will not permit a man to be simply anti-Communist. A citizen who expresses his opposition to Communism, and tries to do something about it, is, in Communist eyes, also anti-Semitic and anti-democratic. I don't know whether they actually believe this or not, but it is what they say.

Likewise, the extreme left represents that anyone not in contempt of the Congress of the United States, or sympathetic to those who were, stands for Federal censorship of the screen.

All of these representations by the left about their opponents are about as reliable, factually, as the present Party line on what's going on in Poland. It is perfectly possible for a decent patriotic American to be bitterly anti-Communist without being anti anything else at all.

As far as censorship goes, my attitude should be perfectly well known to the Guild by this time. Only last year, I gave the executive board of the Guild, for its information, a copy of a letter I had written to a Mr. Eugene Dooley, who had proposed censorship legislation. The Editorial Board of *The Screen Writer* deemed my letter too hot for publication. At least, that's what they said.

However, to clear this matter up, once and for all, let me say again I am opposed unequivocally to censorship in any form whatsoever, whether it be imposed by the Federal government, the State, the city, church groups, private organizations, or individuals.

I believe that the un-American Activities Committee is composed principally of representative Congressmen, doing their duty as they see it. I don't believe that they have any idea of establishing or even proposing Federal censorship. If they should make any such attempt, I would fight it with every medium at my command.

I believe that the committee singled out the motion picture industry for investigation at this time because of the public relations involved. There are

other industries that have difficulty with Communists, but they are page ten industries. Strategically, I believe that the committee was correct in turning its attention first to the industry which could spotlight conditions for the average American with streamer headlines, and extensive radio and newsreel coverage.

You see, there are many patriotic citizens who persist in regarding Communism as a national, rather than a sectional or industry problem, and men of good will invariably give their first loyalty to their country.

RICHARD MACAULAY

KEN CROSSEN, president of the Mystery Writers of America, Inc., sends his greetings to the writers among the "unfriendly" witnesses before the Washington hearings:

Dear Fellow Writers:

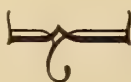
While I am aware that the word "fellow" has taken on a certain Thom-Asian meaning and has generally fallen into disrepute, I feel that I may still use it in the above sense with what is probably a maximum of security. So, let me repeat, Dear Fellow Writers, since I am using it as a term of affection rather than as a mere salutation.

I read the new stories yesterday and listened to the broadcast last night of the session of the Committee on un-American Activities with a growing sense of self respect, for you all did much to honor our profession. I want to thank you for this.

As a member of three writers' organizations, and officer of one, I can't help feeling that many of us in these other organizations should apologize for not being with you in the flesh as well as in the spirit. As I look at the names of those of you who have been called to Washington, or mentioned in the testimony of other witnesses, I can't help but realize that it is a roll call of those who have been most active in the fight for the rights of writers and that this is, in a way, a testament to how well you have fought.

Never have I felt as much pride as I do now in thinking of you as fellow writers and as fellow Americans.

KEN CROSSEN



# News Notes

★ Current programs in the N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's History of the Motion Picture are: The Ukraine: Dovzhenko, *Arsenal*, Dec. 5, 6, 7; The Social Film: Emler: *Fragment of an Empire*, Dec. 8, 9, 10, 11; Transition to Sound: *The Road to Life*, Dec. 12, 13, 14; The Vasilyev Brothers: *Chapayev*, Dec. 16, 17, 18, 19; Kozintzev and Trauberg (II): *Youth of Maxim*, Dec. 19, 20, 21; Counter-Propaganda: *Professor Mamlock*, Dec. 22, 23, 24; The Films of Eisenstein (III): *Alexander Nevsky* Dec. 26, 27, 28; A Program of Abstract Films, Dec. 29, 30, 31.

★ The now famous feature in the September, 1947, issue of *The Screen Writer*, 'Bindle Biog' by Hugh Herbert, SWG vice-president, is being reprinted in its entirety in *Life*—and with compensation to the writer for this literary re-issue.

★ SWG member Stanley Richards has sold a one-act comedy, *Mr. Bell's Creation*, to Samuel French for immediate publication.

★ *Talk in Darkness*, a one-act play by SWG member Malvin Wald has been awarded a prize in a recent play-writing contest sponsored by the National Theatre Conference. In the past two months, a cast from the Actors Lab has been performing *Talk in Darkness* at meetings of the local chapters of the American Veterans Committee, the National Negro Con-

gress, the Southland Jewish Organization and the United Negro and Allied Veterans Association.

★ Richard G. Hubler, member of *The Screen Writer* editorial committee for the past year, has written a satire, *Candide in Hollywood*, for spring publication by Rinehart.

★ Gordon Kahn, editor of *The Screen Writer*, will describe motion picture making and travel in Mexico in the January issue of *Holiday*.

★ SWG member Allan Chase's new novel, *Black Star*, is on the Boni & Gaer spring publications list. Chase's *Falange*, an expose of fascism in Latin America, is a world best seller, and his recent novel, *Seven Arrows*, has passed the 2,000,000 mark in sales.

★ SWG member Arthur E. Orloff has been signed by CBS to script the Hawk Larabee air show.

★ SWG member Theodore Seuss ("Dr. Seuss") had his latest juvenile, *McElligot's Pool*, published in September by *Random House*. This same book is also scheduled as a forthcoming book-of-the-month selection by the *Junior Literary Guild*.

★ Edwin S. Mills, Jr., whose article on television is published in this issue of *The Screen Writer*, is on leave of absence from his job as television producer at NBC, New York, to finish his novel, *Oh Proudly Gallewa*, to be published by Houghton Mifflin.

★ SWG member Samson Raphaelson has a short story, *Confetti*, in the January *Esquire*. His story, *The Greatest Idea in the World*, is included in Martha Foley's *Best American Short Stories*, 1947. Mr. Raphaelson will be a visiting professor in the field of creative writing at the University of Illinois during the second semester of the current college year. Dorshka Raphaelson, his wife, has just had an untitled novel accepted for spring publication by Random House.

★ SWG member Valentine Davies' best-selling novel, *Miracle on 34th Street*, is the December Christmas dividend book of the Book-of-the-Month Club, with a special edition of more than 400,000 copies.

★ *New Theatre* magazine, England's leading serious magazine of the stage, owned by John Collier and W. A. Ramsay, announces American subscriptions are available at \$3.50 a year. The address is 374 Gray's Inn Road, London, W. C. I., England.

★ *Years Ago*, Ruth Gordon's comedy, will end its present run at the Pasadena Playhouse on Dec. 14.

★ Robert Joseph's *Berlin at Midnight* will be published early next spring by Greenberg. Mr. Joseph, who has contributed articles to *The Screen Writer*, was U. S. films officer in Berlin.

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# Manuscript Market

JULY 1, 1947 TO NOVEMBER 1, 1947

LISTING THE AUTHORS, TITLES AND CHARACTER OF LITERARY MATERIAL RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY THE MOTION PICTURE STUDIOS

## COLUMBIA PICTURES

**RUTH BROOKS FLIPPEN**, Genius, Incorporated, Unpublished Story.  
**LEE HORTON**, The Last 30 Minutes, Unpublished story

## WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

**ELLIS PARKER BUTLER**, Pigs Is Pigs, Published Story  
**MARY JANE CARR**, Children of the Covered Wagon, Book

## ENTERPRISE PRODUCTIONS

**FRANCIS SILL WICKWARE**, Tuesday To Bed, Novel

## EAGLE-LION STUDIOS

**GEORGE AXELROD**, Beggar's Choice, Novel  
**MURRAY FORBES**, Hollow Triumph, Novel  
**JACK POLLEXFEN** (with Aubrey Wisberg) Sons of the Musketeers, Unpublished Story  
**AUBREY WISBERG** (with Jack Pollexfen) Sons Of The Musketeers, Unpublished Story

## METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER

**MARCIA DAVENPORT**, East Side West Side, Novel  
**EARL FELTON**, The Odyssey Of Eddie Arco, Unpublished Story  
**MELVIN FRANK** (with Norman Panama) The Spy, Unpublished Story  
**WILLIAM WISTER HAINES**, Command Decision, Novel and Play  
**NOEL LANGLEY** (with Robert Adolph Wilton Morley) Edward My Son, Play  
**ROBERT MORLEY** (with Noel Langley) Edward My Son, Play  
**NORMAN PANAMA** (with Melvin Frank) The Spy, Unpublished Story  
**GEORGE TABORI**, Barsa, Unpublished Story  
**MARITTA WOLFF**, About Lyddy Thomas, Novel

## MONOGRAM PICTURES

**EUSTACE ADAMS**, Sixteen Fathoms Deep, Unpublished Story  
**DONALD BARRY**, Mr. Gideon, Unpublished Story (Allied Artists)

**JOHN CHAMPION** (with Blake Edwards) Panhandle, Screenplay

**EDDIE CLINE** (with Barney Gerard) Jiggs And Maggie In Society, Screenplay

**HAL COLLINS** (with Monty Collins) The Old Gray Mayor, Unpublished Story

**MONTY COLLINS** (with Hal Collins) The Old Gray Mayor, Unpublished Story

**ROBERT CONSIDINE**, The Babe Ruth Story, Screenplay (Allied Artists)

**BLAKE EDWARDS** (with John Champion) Panhandle, Screenplay

**BARNEY GERARD** (with Eddie Cline) Jiggs And Maggie In Society, Screenplay

**JEROME T. GOLLARD** (with Gerald Schnitzer) Finders Keepers, Unpublished Story

**TALBERT JOSSELYN**, Smuggler's Cave, Published Story

**FORREST JUDD**, The Natchez Trace, Screenplay (Allied Artists)

**SAMUEL NEWMAN**, Murder By Alphabet, Screenplay

**ALFRED NOYES**, The Highwayman, Poem (Allied Artists)

**CRAIG RICE**, The Big Story, Unpublished Story (Allied Artists)

**TIM RYAN** (with Gerald Schnitzer and Eddie Seward) Angel's Alley, Screenplay

**GEORGE WALLACE SAYRE**, Rocky, Unpublished Story

**EDDIE SEWARD** (with Tim Ryan and Gerald Schnitzer) Angel's Alley, Screenplay

**GERALD SCHNITZER** (with Tim Ryan and Eddie Seward) Angel's Alley, Screenplay

**GERALD SCHNITZER** (with Jerome T. Gollard) Finders Keepers, Unpublished Story

**LEON WARE**, Search, Published Story

## RKO RADIO

**ELEANOR HARRIS**, Every Girl Should Be Married, Published Short Story

**JERRY HORWIN**, Mister Music, Unpublished Story

**ADRIAN SCOTT**, The Great Man's Whiskers, One Act Play

## REPUBLIC

**JAMES EDWARD GRANT**, The Far Outpost, Screenplay

**MANNY SEFF** (with Paul Yawitz) One Man's Diary, Screenplay

**GEORGE WAGGNER**, Eagles In Exile, Unpublished Story

**PAUL YAWITZ** (with Manny Seff) One Man's Diary, Screenplay

## TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

**ARNOLD AUERBACH** (with Harold Rome) Call Me Mister, Play

**SY BARTLETT** (with Beirne Lay, Jr.) Twelve O'Clock High, Novel

**WHIT BURNETT** (with John Penn) Immortal Bachelor, Novel

**GWEN DAVENPORT**, Velvedere, Novel

**CLIFFORD GOLDSMITH**, Mr. Cooper's Left Hand, Play

**ARTHUR HOPKINS** (with George M. Watters) Burlesque, Play

**WILLIAM IRISH**, Waltz Into Darkness, Novel

**WILL JAMES**, Sand, Novel

**BEIRNE LAY, JR.** (with Sy Bartlett) Twelve O'Clock High, Novel

**CLIVE STAPLES LEWIS**, The Screwtape Letters, Book

**JOHN PENN** (with Whit Burnett) Immortal Bachelor, Novel

**HAROLD ROME** (with Arnold Auerbach) Call Me Mister, Play

**GEORGE M. WATTERS** (with Arthur Hopkins) Burlesque, Play

## TRIANGLE PRODUCTIONS

**HOAGY CARMICHAEL**, Stardust Road, Autobiography

## WARNER BROTHERS

**MAXWELL ANDERSON**, Key Largo, Play

**ALLEN BORETZ**, Fargo Girl, Unpublished Story

**L. BUS-FEKETE**, Ladies And Gentleman, Drama Basis of Hecht and MacArthur Play

**FOSTER FITZ-SIMONS**, Bright Leaf, Unpublished Novel

**BEN HECHT** (with Charles MacArthur) Ladies And Gentlemen, Play

**SIDNEY KINGSLEY**, The Patriots, Play

**CHARLES MacARTHUR** (with Ben Hecht) Ladies and Gentlemen, Play

**GRAEME LORIMER** (with Sarah Lorimer and Eileen Tighe) Feature For June, Play

**SARAH LORIMER** (with Graeme Lorimer and Eileen Tighe) Feature For June, Play

**EILEEN TIGHE** (with Graeme Lorimer and Sarah Lorimer) Feature For June, Play

## NEXT MONTH AND THEREAFTER

T. E. B. CLARKE	British Writers Speak Out
H. L. DAVIS	Hollywood Notes
SYDNEY BOX	Creative Immunity
ISOBEL LENNART	Writing Film Musicals
GARRETT GRAHAM	1947 Hollywood Review
DAVID CHANDLER	Diary and a Dupe Addict
LUCI WARD & JACK NATTEFORD	Economics of the Horse Opera
HENRY MYERS	Alice in Paris
SIDNEY FLEISHER	New Book Contracts
PETER LYON	The New Deal in Radio Writing
NORMAN LEE	Hollywood! You've Been Warned!

And Further Articles by ROBERT ARDREY, JOHN COLLIER, EARL FELTON, SAMUEL FULLER, MILT GROSS, RICHARD G. HUBLER, TALBOT JENNINGS, EMERIC PRESSBURGER, JOSEPH SISTROM, and others.

*Beginning with the January issue, Richard English will be editor of The Screen Writer, assisted by a newly appointed Editorial Committee. Important features are being planned, and will be announced in the near future.*

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UNEMPLOYMENT 1: *Markets For Words*

By

STEPHEN LONGSTREET, With An Editorial Foreword

JOSEPH SISTROM: *The Writer-Producer Relationship*

ROBERT PIROSH: *Outside U. S. A.*

F. HUGH HERBERT: *Seeing Red*

T. E. B. CLARKE: *British Writers Speak Out*

JACK NATTEFORD and LUCI WARD:

*Economics of the Horse Opera*

FRANK LAUNDER: *Letter From London*

ERNST LUBITSCH:

A Symposium on His Contribution to Motion Pictures By MAURICE  
CHEVALIER, CHARLES BRACKETT & BILLY WILDER,  
JEANETTE MacDONALD, HANS KRALY, SAMSON  
RAPHAELSON, STEFFIE TRONDLE AND DARRYL F.

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January, 1948

25c



Editorial • Book Reviews

News Notes • Screen Credits



# Letter From London

FRANK LAUNDER, British writer-producer who was recently a SWG guest at a special-seminar at Lucey's and who has contributed before to *The Screen Writer*, sends the following letter and London *Times* editorial. Mr. Launder is President of the British Screen-writers' Association.

THE recent issue of *The Screen Writer* containing the special section on the British tax situation, has been a great success here in England. The magazine has been much in demand. I have lent my copies to many people, and more are asking for it.

I enclose a leader from the London *Times* which I think should be interesting to people in Hollywood, and which I hope you can reprint.

[The *Times* editorial follows:]

## ENGLAND, THEIR ENGLAND

"Inexorably, or at least with every appearance of inexorability, the day approaches after which we shall see no more new American films. British producers will do their best to fill the gap thus created and we shall bear up as manfully as we may; but it would be folly to deny that something will be missing from our lives. That something will not be the same thing in every case, for our likes and dislikes vary. Some will mourn the entrancing Miss Blank; others, strangely invulnerable to her charms, will sigh principally for the dynamic Mr. Dash. But a fan bereaved of a star is not necessarily inconsolable, for after all the star may cross the Atlantic and make a picture over here, or the fan may — such is human inconstancy — transfer his or her idolatry to a British player. There is hope, too, for those who feel chiefly the loss of a particular genre. Neither our climate nor the mouths of our horses are particularly well adapted to the making of "Westerns," but there is no reason why we should not have a shot at it. As for tremendously bad films about the lives of celebrated musicians, we can turn them out at a pinch, and it may even prove possible to show the

(Continued on Page 36)

# The Screen Writer

Vol. 3, No. 8

JANUARY, 1948

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## Authors League of America Statement on Film Censorship and Blacklisting

THE Council of the Authors League protests against the immoderate, uncontrolled, and radically harmful form of censorship now being exercised on the entire profession of writing by the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities.

We do not deny the right of Congress to investigate for legislative purposes but we stand whole-heartedly opposed to the present practice of this committee on un-American Activities. By denying to an author the accepted democratic safeguard of witnesses in his own defense or the elementary right of cross examination, this Committee has encouraged witnesses to make unsupported public charges which blacken the authors' reputation, and has thus clearly constituted a form of censorship dangerous to the rights and economic subsistence of all authors. Carried to its logical extremity this method of censorship by defamation has already affected not only some of our League members but can affect all who deal in any way with writing for public dissemination.

*The motion picture industry has cravenly submitted to this censorship by blacklisting from employment a group of writers for their alleged political beliefs. These are the effects of this sort of arbitrary censorship.*

The intent of censorship is to deny to the individual author, his publisher, and producer, the right to distribute and sell the product of his intelligence and his art. In the past this has commonly operated only against a work produced and issued to the public, and only to one work at a time. The author so censored has had the opportunity to oppose and refute the specific accusations in courts of law.

Here, however, we are faced with a different form of censorship. Here the man *himself* is proclaimed suspect.. And the Committee has avoided, as probably fatal to its whole malign project, the necessity of impugning the authors' work in detail. Indeed, the whole corpus of a man's work, past and future, is thus declared suspect. It is obvious that any who buy and use the work of that author are to be clearly warned that they may be adjudged collaborators with a citizen so arbitrarily declared to be subversive, and may thus themselves be subject to the same calumny and suspicion, open to the same grave yet unproven charge of conduct contrary to the interests of their country.

*We repeat, the motion picture industry has already submitted to this warning. There has thus been established a method and a principle of censorship, fiercely unfair, basically undemocratic, and deeply un-American. We therefore earnestly and urgently protest this unwarranted and invidious censorship with all the power at our command.*



# Unemployment I

*The screen writer today is faced with the problem of what to do until the agent calls. The total membership of the Screen Writers Guild is 1457—and as we go into the New Year, only 408 are employed by the major and independent studios. The conventional remedy, recommended by agents, story editors, and producers is all too frequently to simply “go home and write down just an idea, we’re desperate for originals.” Yet between July 1st and November 1st, 1947, only 17 originals were purchased. This, and similar problems will be discussed under this heading each month.*

*But in the meantime, there’s the man at the door who can’t understand why we don’t get into some steady line of business where we can pay our bills.*

*The following article may help you tell that man at the door to go mind his own business. While it will not enable anyone to buy mink coats or that convertible he wants, it is a life-raft that can come in handy. Anyone not interested in drowning will find it informative.*

..... EDITOR

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## Markets for Words

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

STEPHEN LONGSTREET, a member of SWG, is now a member of the Editorial Committee and Book Editor of *The Screen Writer*, to which he has previously contributed. He is a novelist, screen writer, cartoonist and playwright. His play *High Button Shoes*, is a current Broadway hit.

MY grandfather disliked public lectures on anything for two reasons: as a young girl my grandmother had fallen in love with Charles Dickens during his American lecture tour and Gramp was never too sure how far this mutual Victorian passion, this damned thing, had gone. Also the most popular lecture of his day was an item billed as *Acres Of Diamonds*.

*Acres Of Diamonds* was a story, told with great feeling, about a man who desired to discover a diamond field, and he left his home and wandered for years, all over the world, and at last, broken and old, he came home to his farm and found that the pebbles

in his backyard were rough diamonds; and had been there all the time. This was a pretty fable of the Horatio Alger age and inspired our grandparents (all except mine) to invest in Graham Bell and Henry Ford and the process of making a seamless bathtub.

Today with unemployment facing over two-thirds of the Hollywood screenwriters, and the future of the entire industry wrapped in one of those Delaware Corporation moods (which looks too darkly ahead into an uncertain future), I think it is time for all of us to look in our own front yard for something; if not acres of diamonds, at least some moonstones and lesser jewels to keep us working and earning until this

unemployment period ends. So, I have certain tried and tested suggestions to make.

In all seriousness I would like to offer some fertile fields for the unemployed screenwriter to root in. I am not peddling vague theories or polite hints on what to do until the telephone rings to tell you that you are "hot at Paramount." Every device, method and source I shall list kept me and many of my friends alive and kicking for twenty years. I have tested what I shall suggest, and it works!

The average unemployed screenwriter, and some of my best friends these days are screenwriters out of work, sits around the house waiting for the agent's call. Some make an effort to dream up an original, some even get the original on paper. There is nothing wrong in writing originals—but story editors tell me that the average original is badly written, quickly kicked out to get a story point on paper. An original should be written carefully, as carefully as a novel or play and should produce the ache in the mind that all hard work does. However I started to write about fields untapped by most screenwriters—and I mean untapped scientifically, systematically and with perseverance.

There is first of all the Standard Model T novel. Now every generation, if it is lucky, produces one or two great novelists. A hundred years may produce only a half a dozen great writers. The rest are craftsmen of talent, and talent is merely the use of craftsmanship, knowledge and procedure. Anybody with enough talent to get a piece of paper into a typewriter can write some sort of a novel. Publishers, those gay fellows with their baggy tweed suits, their big smelly pipes and the delightful habit of taking you to Twenty One for lunch—many successful writers tell me—don't want to discover a new *War and Peace*, or *Vanity Fair*, or Boswell's *Johnson*. They want—and again I quote my successful friends—the stuff that best sellers are made of. *The Moneyman*, *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Foxes Of Harrow*, *Proud Destiny*, *Peace Of Mind*, and works of that sort. I suppose none of these books will mean a thing to anyone next season—or the season beyond. Yet each is a pocket gold mine to its publisher and its author. Any man or gal who calls himself a screenwriter, I feel, can write a book as good as any listed above. This is not merely blowing advice through my hat.

An average motion picture and a popular novel are really the same thing, product or commodity. Both are produced for simple entertainment, and it is a special talent, but a talent only. The screen has not yet produced a Tolstoy or a Henry James or a Balzac, but neither has Random House or Doubleday or Simon and Schuster! We are all people of talent so let us

have no fears that the publisher will buy only *Madame Bovary* or *Moll Flanders* or *Moby Dick* from us.

**B**EGIN by putting down two or three chapters of a story on paper. Style, an old teacher once told me, is only one sentence following another sentence, and chapters are only a certain number of pages. Charwomen, housewives and cigar store clerks have written best selling novels by merely covering two pages of paper with prose a day, and stopping when they finish a ream of paper. As a matter of fact, it is discouraging to a professional novelist to see how often highly touted contests are won by some frustrated housefrau with a shabby first novel. M.G.M.'s huge novel contest has yet to turn up a decent book.

Get three chapters of an idea done; don't sluff it off, work hard on it, make the idea as novel, as witty or as full of character and love and desire and hope as you would a screen idea you are presenting to, say, Jerry Wald. The New York publishers have leg men, those wonderful zombies with checkbooks, stashed away all over this town. If they like your idea you can get up to three or four thousand dollars doled out to you at about a hundred dollars a week until the novel is finished. A good novel can be written in anywhere from six weeks to six months. After all Voltaire wrote *Candide* in twenty-four hours, and Dostoevski rammed out his novels, sometimes hitting ten thousand words a day. And you ain't Dostoevski. Speed never hurt a real writer if he's trying hard.

I lived for years on publishers' advances. The contemporary novel—remember—is a simple machine-made thing with lots of heart, character and fun in it, and often pleasant to write. The surprise is that you *may* be writing a great classic and not know it. Three volumes of my vast output have been admitted into the sacred grooves as literature by the critics (I wish I could say they lost money to prove a point).

Daniel Defoe, the pappy of the modern novel, was a hack writer, his pen for hire to anyone, and he wrote *Moll Flanders* and *Robinson Crusoe* to get a little fast cash. He wasn't writing what the men-about-literature call art. He was just setting down something that interested him while unemployed, while waiting for the demand of political pamphlets to come back. Mark Twain didn't think of himself as a great author; he felt you had to be a New England snob in chin whiskers, to have touched Harvard, to be a real writer. He wrote *Huck Finn* and *Life on the Mississippi* because he needed money to enlarge his house, buy a farm and keep his wife in the fashion her father had raised her in. When he wrote *Art* with a capital A he



produced *Joan of Arc* which is practically chloroform in print. Balzac wanted to marry a rich Polish countess and grow pineapples in France and fill a house full of paintings; he had no idea the stuff he turned out in reams had any value as literature. Proust produced the great *Remembrance of Things Past* not only as a writer, but also in part because he wanted to show certain people who had snubbed him what a bright boy they were turning away.

So if you do write a novel, and write it because you need money while unemployed, don't worry because it isn't art. . . . You may be writing Art against your own wishes. Doctor Johnson said it: "Only a fool doesn't write for money."

SUPPOSE you don't get that advance from a publisher? The next time you go calling for your wife in a beauty parlor read some of the movie magazines that clutter up the waiting room. The interviews with the stars are enough to turn any healthy stomach, but if it's a hungry stomach, just remember that the magazines pay from two to five hundred for a story about Hollywood. Any idiot can write them, one editor told me; in fact, idiots have a natural flair for such stuff. You will just have to lower yourself to a moron's level, he said. So study the samples, call up a few of the local magazine offices, and go to work.

The great American goons—to quote my editor friend in detail—who devour these magazines are star happy. They want to know what happens to a star from the time he opens his baby blue eyes to the moment he gets down on his tailored pajama knees and says his prayers and is tucked in for the night. The editor was not kidding actors. The real actor, and the one that appears in these fan magazines is, of course, not the same person. A real actor is human. He gets drunk, falls passionately in love with impossible dames, and curses his producer in Anglo-Saxon—for love and hate are both four-letter words. In this Never Never Land of Fan Magazines there is real gold for any writer who can write interestingly about the dream world of the movie fan's idea of Glamour Puss. You will not win the Pulitzer Prize, but the landlord will accept the checks. But be sure to study your models. Don't give them An Essay on the Focus of the Coated Lens and Low Key Lighting, when they want to be told that their favorite actress spent the first forty years of her life in a convent studying soil chemistry. Again I am not writing of something I just heard about. I created fan magazine filler and the filler helped fill me. I would rather have written *The Red Badge of Courage*—but I ate.

As the novel changed from art to Edna Ferber, and

people began to take their mental nourishment in motion picture form, the comic strip which used to be funny, became a story telling device for simple souls. The millions of people (including me, too) who read *Li'l Abner* every morning outnumber the people who can recite the poems of the Earl of Rochester or the sonnets of Shelley a million to one.

The creator of *Li'l Abner* is a man of wit, intelligence and worldly wisdom. He writes his own story line. However, not all cartoonists are Milt Gross or Ralph Barton. Some of them—an art critic once said—know what a book is, ("It's a thing you place a glass of gin on to keep it from taking the varnish off the furniture, you dope . . .") and many of them can read print, but there are rumors that the most brilliant draftsmen can't write very well. Yet they must turn out thousands of feet of solid action-packed, character-filled, exciting story six times a week, and there is the Sunday page. Most of them hire story writers. People who give them their plot, and there is always a shortage of good story people in the cartoonfield. Don't try to create a new cartoon character, don't get an artist to draw one for you. There are too many cartoons now and there is a newsprint shortage (except in Beverly Hills where I have to wade through a lawn covered with advertising throw-aways every dawn). Contact either the cartoonist direct, or the syndicate for which he works. Present your credits and your ideas in a good letter, or over a hot martini with the artist or his agents. There is a little selling involved. But a good story man can make twenty thousand dollars a year creating the ideas and plot line for a fairly popular cartoon strip. A smash hit makes Louis Mayer look like a charity case.

Most of those witty gags under drawings by Peter Arno, Charles Addams and others in *The New Yorker* are not created by those artists. They are bought from free lance gag men and given to the artist to illustrate. I hope this shatters no illusions—but it's only another example of how writers get no credit. (See—said my secretary—the world is just like Hollywood—only bigger.) I once shattered the happiness of a Pasadena hostess by telling her that her favorite cartoonist couldn't think his way out of a phone booth unassisted. The prices for one-line gag ideas run from fifteen dollars to thirty. It's no life of ease—but a good week can pay the food bills and have a little left over to buy gasoline for the car on weekends. The best gags come from twisting newspaper headlines around.

Gags lead, of course, to what some people call the curse of modern civilization, the radio. This is a little cruel—but maybe true. I spent ten years in the radio mills, came out a whole but perhaps a saddened man. When I started writing soap opera serials at twenty-

five dollars a fifteen minute radio script was often called a bed of neurosis. When I quit I was turning up my nose at eighteen hundred a week. I may add in passing that I am the radio writer who told Ed Gardner that the character "Archie" was not going to go, and that I also drove Bob Hope off the air in thirteen weeks, an ordeal he recovered from, and he went on to real success, without me.

THE demand for writers in radio is constant and the pace is killing. But the money is as good as picture money, often better. The prices are sometimes much higher. Most radio writers tell me they would trade all of radio to the Russians for a good fullback for the Los Angeles Rams, but the fault, I suspect, is the result of selling out a great art form to the packagers of tripe, and letting it slip into the hands of the hucksters, cut-purses and reformed con men and footpads that are the advertising agencies. If there is an honest agency man—one radio writer told me—I have never met him. So be sure—he went on—your contacts are iron-clad, your legs crossed and the crookedest lawyer you can hire is aware of your every move.

"It's really not that bad," I said. "Oh yes," he said, "anyone who has written a motion picture script can be Bernard Shaw when it comes to radio writing. One writes for senile dementia, sex addled housewives and sinister kiddies who cut up cats in their backyards. I am not trying to be funny about this; radio writing is an insult to your intelligence."

"Can I quote you?"

"These are hard times and harder ones are coming, print it. And please, Norman Corwin, don't write me a letter saying *you* are an artist. I admit it; but it doesn't change my opinion about radio much."

My friend needs a rest.

So listen to your radio, prepare a radio script. It's just like a motion picture script but you write only for the ear. Write what you do best; comedy, drama, horror or character. Submit these samples to the advertising agencies (being sure to file copies in the right places for protection). Cultivate radio actors, producers and directors. I can't impress upon you too often how important it is to make the proper contacts and meet the right people. They envy picture people, so socially you are welcome.

Now the magazines. There are so many of them and they demand so many different things. Actually it only appears so. First of all, all the hard things you have heard about motion pictures—at cocktail parties—apply much more honestly to the popular slick large

circulation magazines. One lady magazine writer always opens her latest magazine by saying: "What has God wrought? Ouch!"

There is the short story market. There are several good, clean formula stories that appear over and over again. Study the magazine you want to work for and see what kind of story they like. There is the folksy little story with the city slicker or city vamp getting beaten all hollow by the simple Juke's type country cousin who turns out to be Gary Cooper or Jimmy Stewart. The boy meets girl, tiffs with girl; then gets her against his clean, manly chest in three thousand words. The witty story, the Hollywood story (please don't). The western story, the big business story, the faith story and half a hundred others. Don't be ashamed of them. All have produced masterpieces in their time. Don't be too unhappy to write them. O. Henry, Kipling and others have done them and done them well. After a while you may develop into rich trade goods, and if you click you are producing the Somerset Maugham, Edna Ferber, Louis Bromfield story which is as marketable as U. S. Steel. Only now it's called the John Doe story (you). And there is always the accident that you might turn out another *Ransom Of The Red Chief*, *The Open Boat*, *The Killers*, or *Pigs Is Pigs*.

Magazines also print a lot of filler; profiles, close-ups and life stories of such people as Mike Curtiz (that market has been a little overloaded of late, but if it's a habit—well), George Washington Carver, the map who invented a ten per cent deadlier than machine guns, new kinds of cooking, what to do with plastics and many other simple little topics. Don't expect the big money, my lady magazine writer tells me. The real rich graft in war experting, breast beating, atom bombing, red baiting, Mickey Mouse art, and enema bag literature, unAmerican vice and the solutions of the world problems by union now, or tracing the migrating habits of the lemmings, is in the hands of a solid group of literary racketeers. You can't cut into this soft business of being an "expert" but the leavings from the trained seals table—the lady explains—are very rewarding. I have done everything in my time from cooking recipes (do you know there are three ways to cook tripe, all bad?) to collecting a dollar a throw from people who sent in samples of their handwriting to be analyzed (this is a real science, like pitching fast curves or tea cup reading). A good writer can get fifty popular items for magazines in a half a day's hunting through the newspapers, the reference books, and his own mind. Prices are very good these days. *Reader's Digest*, in its surge towards a better and cleaner life, pays from twelve hundred to two thousand dollars for a four-page story: *The*



## THE SCREEN WRITER

*Most Unforgettable Character I Ever Met.* However, as one well known author and member of the SWG said after hitting the jackpot: "It's strictly a one shot, you're not allowed to meet two most unforgettable characters."

I have tried to write these sign posts to extra money, in an easy walk, not too heavy or serious; I don't want to sound like the broken down flops who open schools and run come-on ads: YOU TOO CAN WRITE SUCCESSFULLY! PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A CAREER IN INTERIOR DECORATING! MAKE FORTUNES SELLING YOUR PERSONALITY IN BEAUTY CULTURE AND HAIR REMOVING. ANYONE CAN COPY THIS BATHING BEAUTY. GIRLS, I MADE TWENTY DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS AFTER SCHOOL IN TEN MINUTES.

SERIOUSLY, there are enough writing jobs to give every unemployed writer two or three hundred dollars a week while he is waiting for a film assignment.

To lump a few markets together. There is the matter of house organs. Plumbers, bakers, drug houses, dog and cats' meat panderers, and of course the burial societies and sellers of cemetery lots have their house organs and magazines. They do not pay a lot and you may often be paid off in due bills (bits of paper they take from advertisers in exchange for ads). I lived like a king one winter in New York on due bills. The opera twice a week. Passes to Radio City. Food at Huylers and Schraffts. Review copies of popular best sellers to read or throw at the cat—even a car that had the one minor defect: an advertisement of a stomach purge water on the doors. I'm not advising any writer to make a habit of living on due bills. It warps natural instincts. But house organs need people with ideas and ability to write captions and create poetry out of hot air furnaces, trusses and even (no kidding) water-and-sound-proof coffins. The jobs are real adventures. I once shared an office with a writer, now a famous playwright, who rewrote a Dr. X . . . on a health food magazine, and his series, *The Male Change of Life*, is almost as famous as Havelock Ellis on sex, but a little more gamey. And greeting card writers have very respectable incomes.

Department stores are eating up miles of text describing the bargains waiting for you behind plate glass and indifferent sales help. Copy writing is fun. At an age when shaving was merely other people's problem I learned about women by describing their underwear, rubber-stretch garments, cuppings and strappings in advertisements. I was a mental roue long

before my sad drift into actual contact with the brighter half of the human race.

I once cornered the market in mail order catalogue copywriting, when it was paying sixty dollars a page (and by speed and strength and a touch of the prose style of Fannie Hurst at her best, ran the price up, at which point a group bought me out and retired me to the detective story market).

This market is pretty dead at this moment. But I used to turn out a detective novel every twenty days (a chapter a day; one hour to a chapter). Start with a body, make it up as you go along—pick out the most unlikely suspect as the killer—never destroy suspense by working from an outline. I used ten pen names, but as I say, this is a pretty over-done field these days. Pulp adventure writing (which I never tried) is also too crowded by expert professionals.

Play writing is the greatest gamble of all. I would not advise it for anyone in a hurry for cash to fight off the wolf in the foyer. The jackpot is really big—but my trunk is packed with plays better than *High Button Shoes*, which bears my name.

However, there is a special play market controlled by such publishers as French, who market one act, two act and three act plays to high schools, Elk pageants, church suppers and other social gatherings where the actors are not too good and the settings are whatever old chairs and drapes are at hand. This market needs clean little plays with from four to eight simple characters that are easy to do with one set. A part for the pretty girl, the handsome football player, the town wit, the ugly smart girl, and some fat and thin people who can make up to be old, wicked or mad. Don't get social minded, political or smutty. It's a simple, home type of show easy to write and it sells well and you collect year after year. But first read some of the samples. Don't write *anything* ever until you know what the product is. Or have I said that before? No matter. Remember this simple rule.

I have just scratched the surface of the needs for writers. Mostly, but not always, I have stuck to those fields in which I have often dipped to pick up a fast needed dollar. There is nothing to be ashamed of in doing this. *Pickwick Papers* started out as the text for a set of rather feeble drawings by a melancholy cartoonist, who read one installment of Charles Dickens and blew his brains out. Upton Sinclair was the fastest adventure pulp writer of his time. Sinclair Lewis sold plots to Jack London for seven dollars each. James Joyce ran a movie theatre in Dublin and wrote his own blurbs as screen trailers. Homer, they say, recited for free drinks and hay, and Edgar Allen Poe once wrote the text for a collection of seashells.

I have not touched on ghost writing; speeches for stuffed shirts, and I have heard of a group of writers who furnish doctors and dentists with a weekly set of jokes to tell their customers, while they are undergoing torture. The doctors and dentists report that their new "found" wit has made them popular; socially and passionately—and business has increased.

There is the field of teaching. Writers are born, but many of them need to be shown a few tricks, and most colleges have courses on the short story, screen writing, play writing and advertising. Many such schools need trained writers—teachers for such courses. The pay is small but there is the advantage of saying one is a college man. A writer I know calls himself a college man because he was once a janitor at the Harvard Medical School where he put on the labels and wrote out the gruesome details of the various organs pickled in alcohol and given him to store away.

He turned into a fine poet but for some reason writes these days only about trees and flowers.

I hope these few hints have been helpful. I know they can be profitable. All I beg is that no one try to contact me personally with their ideas. I am the wrong person to see. The person to meet is the buyer or the payer. Besides, old habit may come back and I might race you to the magazine office or advertising agency.

As a closing remark may I again repeat there is nothing degrading in doing all this border line writing. Many a great writer in his hungry days would have been happy to have the dexterity and flexibility every good screen writer has. It would have kept Walt Whitman from standing outside a New York saloon one bitter cold day and asking every man that came out of the place: "Could you spare a dollar to keep America's greatest poet from starving to death?"



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen (December 17, 1947)

Columbia—Louella MacFarlane; alternate, Edward Huebsch.

MGM—Anne Chapin; alternate, Sonya Levien; Joseph Ansen, Robert Nathan, and George Wells, Studio Committee.

Paramount — Theodore Strauss; alternate, Richard Breen.

Republic—Sloan Nibley; alternate, Patrick Ford.

RKO—Daniel Mainwaring; alternate, Martin Rackin.

20th Century-Fox — Richard Murphy; alternate, Wanda Tuchok.

Universal-International—Silvia Richards; alternates, Peter Berneis, Robert Thoeren.

Warners—James Webb; alternate, Edmund North.

(The above studio representatives of the Guild were elected on December 10, 1947, to serve for the ensuing year.)



# The Writer-Producer Relationship

JOSEPH SISTROM

*JOSEPH SISTROM is a motion picture producer. He has produced such recent pictures as Double Indemnity, Incendiary Blonde, Wake Island and Star Spangled Rhythm.*

WHEN a writer in Hollywood says he's "working," he means that he is being paid by some studio, but a studio is a vast impersonal entity identifiable, if at all, only by an illegible signature on a check.

The man to whom the average writer talks and to whom he delivers his finished work, and who is incidentally in most instances responsible for his employment in the first place, is a producer, and it is through this man—the producer—that the writer's contributions, good or bad, reach the screen.

Before we go any further, we will have to do something about this word "producer." Producer, in Hollywood, has so many meanings and shades of meaning—even limiting the count to the printable ones—that one of the more scholarly journals of semantics ought to make a special study of it. There is for example, that mysterious corporate entity which appears in the first paragraph of most contracts and is "hereinafter referred to as the 'producer'."

And there is that enterprising individual who gets an idea, a star or a story; begs, borrows or steals enough money to make a picture, and if he is lucky, wangles a release. And there is the group whose members carry imposing titles ranging from "Executive First Vice-President in Charge of Production" through "Executive Producer" to simple "Executive." All these and their various subdivisions and combinations, are producers.

There is, however, another group also called producers with whom I believe most writers have to deal and to whom this discussion is limited. I refer, of course, to the employee-producers. The reasons why this position developed in the picture industry need not concern us here. It is sufficient that it did and is apparently as permanent as death or taxes.

These two individuals, the writer and the producer, spend a great deal of time together, and if the relation-

ship between them is a happy one the two participants will, by and large, live a long time, enjoy harmonious marriages, get rich and incidentally, make reasonably good movies. If it is not, comes ulcers, divorce, and the A.A.—and not the A.A.A. either. Unfortunately, and contrary to Mr. Wilkerson's recent statistics, the latter case seems to be in the majority and it is the purpose of this inquiry to determine the reasons for this deplorable state of affairs.

If the man with the candid mike were to come to Hollywood and secrete his dreadful little eavesdropper in the various saloons, steam rooms, restaurants, country clubs and commissaries where writers and producers foregather, he would shortly become convinced that there are only two reasons for writers and producers being unhappy with one another—stupidity and lack of talent.

It is true that there are idiot producers, just as there are writers of at best vestigial talent, and it is also true, that occasionally, an idiot producer gets hooked up with a no-talent writer. Luckily in this case, no one is unhappy except maybe the exhibitor.

However, the number of these unfortunates seems to bear no relation to the number of times their existence is cited as the reason for the failure of some pet project. Some of this name-calling is of course, malicious; its virulence usually bearing a geometric ratio to the amount of time which has lapsed since the name-caller's last good picture, but it can't all be accounted for on these grounds.

It is possible that the underlying reason for the dissension which is so often blamed on stupidity and lack of talent, is engendered by a misunderstanding by both parties of the producer's function. This is not very surprising, since attempting to define the function of a producer is a good deal like wrestling with an octopus—there always seems to be an extra piece which

is not accounted for. Maybe the easiest way is to determine what the word "function" means in terms of motion pictures.

**T**HERE are, I believe, three primary functions involved in the making of a picture—writing, directing, and producing. (This is not meant to belittle all the others — photography, scenic design, cutting, etc., but they are almost entirely dependent on the first three.) This does not mean that the individual writer cannot direct, or the individual director, produce, or any permutation of the three, but this fusion of personalities should not be confused with the functions. They remain distinct, even though a single individual performs all three. The functions of writing are clear almost by definition.

The writer writes (despite a minority tendency to confuse this with stenography) and the director, directs. But what about the producer? What does he do? And what would happen if he didn't do it? To take the second question first, the answer is nothing. Nothing would happen except that a considerable number of pictures—some good, some bad—wouldn't get made.

The first question is of course, the \$64 one. Since we are dealing here with the creative functions of the producer—if any—we can simplify the question by eliminating his non-creative activities. The producer is among other things, the representative of his employer, and as such he has various problems. He must decide whether the proposed location trip to Timbuctoo will add enough to the validity of the picture to be worth the cost. He must determine whether cameraman Joe Blow's outstanding talent in low-key photography is or is not offset by his inability to do the most for a certain ageing actress. He must carefully weigh the virtues of a given free-lance actor against the obvious advantages of building up a studio personality. He worries about schedules, March 4th tax dates, budgets, previews, the crochets of actors and the idiosyncrasies of actresses.

The catalogue can be extended indefinitely. And what is left? What is the producer's creative function? A writer friend of mine who spent many years in various other fields of writing before coming here, once told me that the nearest parallel to the Hollywood producer that he knew of was the big-time magazine editor. "Ray Long," he said, banging down his glass, "would have made bums out of all you guys."

What little I know about magazine editors in general and Ray Long in particular, leads me to believe that as analogies go, this one is fairly apt. The producer,

like the editor, has varying relationships with the writer depending to a considerable degree on the genesis of the material and its condition when it gets to him. Ray Long, for example, might have called up a regular contributor and asked him if he would like to do a piece on something or other about which the contributor was not very enthusiastic until he had heard Mr. Long's slant on it, and at the other extreme, to stay with Mr. Long for a moment, he might one morning have opened his mail and found Willa Cather's latest perfect short story. (Incidentally, the fact that Willa Cather sent it to him is one of the factors that made him a great editor.)

**I**N between are writers who have a good background knowledge but little technical experience in getting it on paper, the lazy ones who need riding, the timid ones who need enthusiasm, and so on. The editor's relationship with these various writers varies considerably in degree. The man who is developing the editor's idea must obviously listen more closely to his ideas than the one who has submitted a complete story, but it does not vary in kind. In all instances the editor is trying to help the writer achieve a desired result.

The parallels with the picture business are, I think, obvious. There is, however, one important difference which arises because of the enormous complexity of our medium.

In the magazine field the opinion of the editor is the automatic measure of what is good or bad. In Hollywood this is not precisely true. We have said that there are three primary functions in the making of a motion picture, and within the technical limits of his function each individual is left to make his own decisions, or at least he should be. That is to say the producer determines the cast, the writer decides which of several methods best introduces the leading man, the director decides whether or not to use a boom and so on. Not that the individual should not get—and welcome—advice from his co-workers, but the decision is his own.

I am firmly convinced that a really good picture—the ones we are all proud of—is nearly always one man's inspiration and that everyone else concerned with it must try to help him realize it. This inspiration can of course come from anyone but ordinarily it stems from the producer, the director, the screen writer or occasionally from the original material. For instance I don't know whose idea it was to switch the theme of *The Brick Foxhole* from homosexuality to anti-Semitism, but that inspiration was indubitably the drive behind *Crossfire*.

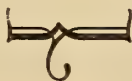
I am sure that if the participants in the making of



a picture—granted reasonably intelligent and talented people—know which of their number is providing the drive, there should be no dissension, no disharmony, and no unhappiness.

This does not mean that there won't be arguments

and fights. There can be, indeed should be, diversity of opinion about scenes, gags, lines, even words, but what there must not be diversity about, is viewpoint. That has to be one person's and when it comes to a decision, that viewpoint must prevail.



## Economy In Reverse

We hope Hollywood was listening to the remarks of B. V. Sturdivant on his visit home from Mexico City, where the former West Coast theatre executive now makes his headquarters as head of one of Mexico's leading circuits.

Sturdivant said that "Extravagant production budgets, luxurious settings, and lavish costuming may disguise the lack of honest story material to United States audiences, but not in the greater part of Latin America."

These extravagant trappings, which he talks about, don't fool anybody on the most important point presently facing this industry—which is the need to produce pictures less extravagantly from a dollar outlay standpoint.

When one reviews some of the "economy measures" being employed by some of the film companies, one is apt to wonder how this industry grew to its present size under a leadership that now appears to have become hesitant and fearful.

We hear so much about the complexities and losses indicated for foreign market operations. The economies necessitated thereby, about which there is so much mention, seems to take the form of cutting a few dollars here and there by elimination of minor personnel and cutting in routines that come within the realm of the petty-cash department.

While this goes on, the general picture of tremendously high-cost production remains little changed, so far as the general observer can ascertain. The bringing of production costs to within some reasonable relation to the costs of other business operations is the task for the top executives. And if they are real top executives they needn't get panicky about it, just function calmly and efficiently in doing their job of making pictures at costs that the theatre traffic will bear.

—SHOWMEN'S TRADE REVIEW

# British Writers Speak Out

T. E. B. CLARKE

*T. E. B. CLARKE, a previous contributor to The Screen Writer, is a contract writer at the Ealing Studios, in England. He has collaborated on many recent screen plays, including Dead of Night. Among his recent original screen plays are Johnny Frenchman and Hue and Cry.*

THE screenwriter in Britain has long been a man with a grievance—or two—or three. Early this year the British Screenwriters' Association sought the co-operation of its members to give these grievances their first official airing. Behind the move lay a hope that the standard of our films might ultimately be raised if producers, associate producers, directors and critics could be presented with a sufficiently impressive consensus of opinion among screenwriters as to what is wrong with the present handling of their all-important work.

The venture was something of a shot in the dark. Its sponsors realised that its results could have little constructive value if no uniformity of opinion were found to exist. However, the results, now collated, show two particular grievances so general as surely to merit close examination by all who have power to remedy them.

Whether these two grievances are nursed to the same extent by the screenwriters of Hollywood, readers of this article will know better than I do; but it's my guess that they will be found sufficiently familiar to give some interest to the outcome of our British quiz.

The opinions I am about to quote are selected from the replies of forty-six screenwriters, averaging twelve years at their job, to the following question:

*What, in your opinion, are the practices of current film production that—*

*a) Present the greatest obstacle to successful screenwriting?*

*b) Most adversely affect the prestige of the screenwriter?*

This, in brief, is what their replies show:

In answer to the first part of the question, two in

every five name the employment of too many writers on one script.

In answer to the second part, two in every five name lack of publicity or reference by critics to the writer of a film.

Since these two particular grievances are in fact more closely related than might at first appear, there is no necessity to split up this summary of replies after the manner of the original question; but I think I might better achieve some flow of continuity if I deal first with the screenwriter's lack of publicity.

Some blame the critics for this, some the producers; but from a general analysis of the replies there emerges our old friend, the vicious circle. Because the critic gives little or no credit to the writer of a film, the producer sees no point in attempting to publicise him; instead, he puts over the impression that his stars, his director and himself are chiefly responsible for any success achieved by that film. The critic allows himself to be thus impressed, and consequently disregards the writer.

Here we have a screenwriter who is also a producer and should therefore be in a position to look over both sides of the fence:

"Writing is still scarcely referred to by the critics at all, more especially when it is original story work. As a producer I have found that little extra kudos is derived from making an original screen story, however prominent the credit given to the writers, and that from a prestige point of view it is in fact more profitable to adapt the classics to the screen. This is a dismal state of affairs, since the film future *ought* to depend for its life blood on original creative writing direct for the screen. The critics are much to blame for this,



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and are both ill informed about the realities of film production and generally incorrigible on this point . . . which, of course, affects the producers' attitude adversely."

Not all critics, however, are unmindful of the fact that there can be no film without a script: for, as another writer testifies, "there is a pronounced tendency (both in the studio and the Press) to give all the credit for a good film to the producer and director, and all the blame for a bad film to the script-writer."

Here, in fairness, I must intervene to say that two or three prominent British critics make it their practice to single out a writer for praise when they consider it deserved; but such critics are regrettably few—and personally I have yet to encounter a film review containing an opposite version of that tired old phrase about stars and director doing their best "with the poor material at their disposal."

THE two opinions so far quoted are levelled mainly against the critic. What have others to say about the producer's disregard of the writer's claim to prestige? Here we have a writer putting upon him the main weight of blame for "failure to recognise the advantages of original film stories, written by competent film writers, over the claims of novels and plays whose sole qualification as films is their publicity value."

One can guess the producer's reply to that one. "But the welfare of my business depends on publicity."

To counter this we have an opinion which says, in effect: "Then why not publicize the work and personality of the screenwriter?" Continues this writer: "Credits are not enough. Filmgoers are primarily interested only in stars, but a moderately successful attempt has been made to familiarise them with the names of directors and producers. No parallel effort has been made on behalf of the screenwriter, whose work is even more fundamental and who is entitled to the same status as that accorded by theatrical managers to dramatic authors."

Several other replies make the same complaint: that there is never any thought of treating the screenwriter with the respect and consideration which the playwright receives. Why should this be?

The reason, says a victim with some feeling, is that "the writer is regarded (in the studio) as a necessary evil rather than as the maker of the blue print from which the film is to be made, and without which nothing in a studio can even commence." He makes an exception of "the playwrights and novelists with names who are employed to write a script, and who, with

remarkably few exceptions, are without the technical knowledge to do so." (Somebody outside the industry has taken the trouble to build up their reputations!)

"The consequence is that the script-writer is without prestige in the eyes of directors and producers. In the writer's experience, remarkably few of these executives have really good creative minds—some of them, indeed, cannot read a script—and the result of this is that their opinions as first readers of the writer's work become at once the opinion of the entire production machine. This spreads to the critics and publicity people with whom the script-writer rarely comes into contact, and so, from the very first, the writer is at a disadvantage. Except in his contract, he is discounted as a contributor to the final result.

"There is only one channel through which the prestige of the writer can be enhanced—that of the critics. It surely is remarkable that, even when the writer receives a solo credit for his shooting script, he is rarely mentioned in reviews. Until the critics realise his importance, and the importance of his contribution to the film, his prestige will never be established. At the moment, generally speaking, he has none at all. The same consideration applies to promotion matter connected with a projected or finished film. In other words, there is only one way in which the writer can achieve personal recognition, and that is by becoming a writer-director; and when he does this, he is still forgotten as a writer: the script is again ignored."

THE playwrights and the novelists, mentioned so frequently as more fortunate craftsmen in the opinions already given, figure largely again in the expressions of Grievance No. 2: the employment of too many writers on one script.

"This practice results in a lack of 'style.' No playwright would allow such liberties to be taken with his material—the position of a playwright is infinitely higher in his profession than that of a screenwriter in his."

There is also plenty of evidence that the playwright's position is unreasonably high in the screenwriter's profession, too.

"There is a mistaken belief that a good writer in another medium—plays or books—must automatically make a good screenwriter and can therefore be called in to give advice over the head of a less famous but more experienced writer of screenplays."

And again:

"Studios tend to call in a well-known writer to do either treatment or shooting script, quite regardless of his capabilities for screenwriting. Though a screen-

writer may do most of the work, the big name gets main credits."

And again:

"A writer is engaged on a long contract and allowed to write a script; then a high salary outsider is hired completely to re-write the script—sometimes to its advantage, often to its detriment."

And when we have set aside the issue of what kind of writers are allocated to a script, there remains "the strange belief of many producers and directors that one writer can take over and improve another writer's story and characterisations with the facility of a plumber called in to finish off another plumber's work."

As another contributor points out, no director has the constant experience of being switched from a subject before completion, another director being engaged to supplement his work; nor is it ever suggested that other directors should collaborate at a later stage. But would it be any more illogical than treating a writer thus?

To quote yet another opinion: "Let us have a system whereby one writer—and one writer only—is assigned to a script in the same way that one director is assigned to the shooting of it." This contributor makes a natural exception of cases where writers prefer of their own accord to work in partnership.

Not that they are given many opportunities for that—hence the castigation of "the power possessed by directors and producers to import fresh writers to alter material, or supply fresh material, without consultation with the original writer."

There is probably something Freudian about that double use of the word "fresh" by a screenwriter. Is there any other word so sure to remove the creases—temporarily, at least—from a film producer's brow, while the writer groans inwardly from his knowledge of how rarely it justifies the ingenuous hopes placed in it?

"The obstacle of producers who think a 'Fresh Mind' is the solution of all problems . . ."

"The menace of the 'Fresh Mind'—the formula of mistrust by the non-creative producer in the creative writer he employs."

And a balder summing-up of this Becher's Brook among screenwriting obstacles:

"The system of engaging you on a subject and having two or three other fellows privately doing the same job elsewhere; plus constant shifting and changing of ideas because the producer casts about for anybody's opinion, from the office boy to his grandmother."

Finally, the airing of a view which, in many a production office, will be considered absurd *only* because of its physical impossibility:

"It is assumed that Shaw, Coward, Shakespeare, Pinero and Molière would write a greater screenplay in collaboration or in relays than any would have been capable of writing by himself."

The adage that there can be no smoke without fire is unchallengeable if trite; and it seems equally indisputable that so many similar conclusions could not have been reached independently without a good deal of solid justification.







## A Symposium

# Ernst Lubitsch

### MAURICE CHEVALIER

I made four pictures with Ernst Lubitsch: *Love Parade*, *Smiling Lieutenant*, *One Hour With You* and *The Merry Widow*.

Our way of working together was always very friendly and appreciative of the other fellow.

In my particular case I think there is no other way to make pictures than to obey the director I have accepted. Kind of placing my reputation on his knees.

But with Ernst, he was big enough to let me suggest a little something now and then, and in that case he would shoot the scene his way and my way. He was the one to decide after what was best.

I understood him in one twink. I knew what he was after.

I caressed a dream to make one more with him. A story called *Papa* from a French play. He liked it, but I was not old enough at that time to play a *Papa*.

Now, I am.

But Ernst is no more young or old. He is just gone. Bless his soul.

He taught me a lot. I did my best to satisfy him.

He stays in my heart as one of my "greats."

*MAURICE CHEVALIER is the famous French stage and screen comedy star.*

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### CHARLES BRACKETT and BILLY WILDER

TO write for Ernst Lubitsch was an education, a stimulus, a privilege, but it was no cinch.

Though he never took credit, he was a writer, too, in the full intimacy of collaboration. One had

to understand the kind of stylized film he wanted to make, and supply it with material. And always he was there, saying, "Is this the best we can do? Does it ring the bell? When it's right, it rings the bell."

He composed his pictures by segments rather than all in one piece. And he was apt to approach each portion with the terrifying statement, "This scene must be *hilahrrious*." Thereupon, all minds involved focused on making the scene *hilahrrious* and were held to that task with a kind of pneumatic-drill steadiness until, by George, the scene became *hilahrrious*.

We remember how, when the pressure was heaviest, when the mere presence of so much mental effort in the room had become oppressive, he would retreat for long periods to that only refuge of collaborators—the bathroom—and come forth with a solution so often that we accused him of keeping a ghost writer hidden in the plumbing.

After the scene was drilled out, the individual lines had to be attacked by the same method. There was a scene in the first picture we did with him, in which Claudette Colbert was supposed to say something withering to Gary Cooper and dive off a raft into the Mediterranean. Always when he came to that line Ernst would go to the same corner of the room where we worked. "Then Claudette says . . . .?" he would enunciate, leaving a proper hollow space and a gigantic question mark, "and makes a graceful dive." His hands would point and he'd dip forward into the corner. Then he would turn back to us, his eyes imploring us, not for just a mediocre joke, not for a fine, showy joke even, but for *the* line—the inevitable withering remark which must be waiting somewhere in space. Incidentally, none of the lines we found was ever *it*, and as a tribute to the tremendous drive of



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personality, may we say that, as we remembered him, standing, diving into the baseboard, our minds again went searching for it, with supreme futility.

On the other hand, when an idea was mentioned which really fertilized his brain, what he could do with it: toss it into the air, make it catch the light one way, then another, spin it out, compress it, try it against this setting, against that, get the nth ultimate out of it.

The greatest disservice one could do him was to be enchanted beyond all reason by his interpretation of some idea too fantastic for celluloid. For instance, in that particular picture, his conception of a mad detective, a detective obsessed with a passion for his own disguises. The hero had hired the fellow to get evidence against his wife and was afraid she might suspect he had done so. Ernst's acting out of the detective reassuring the husband on that score remains with us:

"Sir, believe me, she suspects nothing. Nothing. Yesterday little did she notice a nun at the corner, telling her beads"—(a look of piercing, maniacal craftiness from the black eyes), "nor, this morning, did she pay any attention to a certain little girl playing marbles in front of the post office."

It was irresistible. One lost track completely of the fact that this figure was to be portrayed by a flesh-and-blood actor, instead of being recounted by a cigar-puffing magician. One rolled on the floor: "That's it! That's it!"

And then the eyes would grow distressed. "I'm not sure. Does it ring the bell? When it's right, it rings the bell. Is this the best we can do?"

*CHARLES BRACKETT and BILLY WILDER  
comprise one of Hollywood's most famous writing-  
producing-directing teams.*

### JEANETTE MacDONALD

ERNST had, not a German, but an American sense of humor. The most American sense of humor I know of. It made for nice understanding with his fellow workers. But I always think of him first as a fighter. A fighter for what he believed in. He'd fight with you and for you anywhere in the world. He was a man of terrific force and vitality. And that was the only thing sad—to see him lose it toward the end. The vitality was still there inside—but he was afraid to let it go. Even when he laughed, it was no longer robust—it was like he had been warned not to laugh too hard. This Thanksgiving he was holding forth at my dinner table, and he was more like his old self than he had been in a long time. He

was quite happy, and very serious in his opinions of the investigations in Washington.

He was always thinking of practical jokes—more than anyone I know, he enjoyed them. There always had to be a big audience around for the denouement. Making *The Merry Widow*, I was under contract to Metro the time they signed Evelyn Laye, the fine British actress, to do musicals, also. I hadn't learned of it yet, but Ernst saw it in the *Hollywood Reporter* headlined: "Evelyn Laye signed by Metro for Musicals." That morning, I had a big emotional scene where I was supposed to be singing while crying, and I started singing, sobbing and breaking my heart all over the set. During the scene I was supposed to go over to a mantelpiece. When I got to the mantelpiece, and was about to put my head down sobbing, there, propped on cardboard right under my eyes, was the headline from the *Reporter*. When I saw it, I stopped singing then and there. I could only stand gaping at that headline—then look blankly around the set. Ernst was laughing to burst.

To me, great people are always simple and Ernst was the simplest man I ever knew. He had no flaw in his greatness, no chichi, nor false vanity. On the set, he had the greatness of his art, but no "artiness." I have known so many directors who idealized him and styled some part of his work in their own careers. And to me, he was the greatest cutter in the business. Only Thanksgiving night he was talking of the lack of knowledge of cutting among some current directors. He cut as he worked on the set—that is, he shot just what he wanted. He visualized in the script the precise way he wanted it to work on the screen and I never knew him to be in trouble on a picture. He whipped his troubles in script. His scripts were almost invariably his pictures.

He never came here nor did I ever go to his house, but what he played the piano and he always ended playing Viennese waltzes. He was limited in his piano accomplishments, and could only play in a couple of keys—but his own satisfaction with his playing made it lovely. I have seen him sit down and play before some of the greatest pianists in the world with no compunction whatsoever and on the sets, frequently push them aside and say—"No, no, I want it to be like this . . ." and somehow even without the technical knowledge, he made them understand and the music became part of him and the picture.

*ERNST LUBITSCH was synonymous with Jeanette MacDonald's motion picture career. Hollywood musicals reached a sophisticated peak in their four pictures together: Love Parade, Monte Carlo, One Hour With You, and The Merry Widow.*

## HANS KRALY

I was to learn later that the young man tenaciously smoking a cigar was Ernst Lubitsch. The year was 1913. The place was Berlin. They were shooting a full-length comedy called *Die Firma heiratat*, an old Union Film Corporation picture, starring Victor Arnold. Lubitsch played the part of an apprentice in a wholesale house, and I played the part of a clerk. His small part was soon to bring Lubitsch to stardom, although at the time I never imagined that he and I were to work for many years together.

A few months later I was up to both ears writing a series of one-reel comedies for the German comedian Albert Paulig. Lubitsch, in the interim, had started to make one-reelers also. He approached me one day and asked if we could do a picture together. I agreed, although as writer the firm could only pay me 25 marks (approximately \$6) for the entire script. Lubitsch admitted that the sum was rather unhandsome, but promised to sweeten the proposition by appointing me his assistant director, at the same time by giving me a small bit to play in the picture.

From that time on we worked together for 17 years.

In those days casting was done in the cafe houses around the Friedrichstrasse. To kill two birds with one stone, Lubitsch suggested that we do our work in the cafes. We would outline a story one day, and write it the next. Two completed one-reel pictures per month was the average. But the actors soon caught on to what we were up to and formed the habit of dropping by our table to ask if we had parts for them. Lubitsch, who had a magnificent gift for concentration, was disturbed by these interruptions. By nature he was somewhat shy and reluctant to hurt anyone's feelings. So he solved the difficulty by fleeing from one obscure cafe to another, always one jump ahead of the actors.

After thirty or forty of these improvised productions, Lubitsch persuaded his producer, Paul Davidson, to let him launch into three-reelers. The first of these, *Schuh Palast Pinkus*, was to achieve a signal success.

It wasn't long before Davidson told me that he had decided to have Lubitsch direct a drama. It was an important decision. Lubitsch had been so successful with comedy that I was dismayed at the idea. But Paul Davidson said, "Don't look at me that way. He can do it! I know it!" I was to discover that my judgment had been wrong. The drama that Lubitsch was to direct was *Der Augen der Mumie Ma*, starring Emil Jannings and Pola Negri. It was to prove the first film drama that the German press took seriously.

From then on in rapid succession came such pictures as *Die Puppe*, *Die Berg Katze*, *Kohlhiesel's Tochter*,

*Rausch*, *Carmen*, *Sumurun*, *Du Barry*, *Anna Boleyn*, *Die Flamme*, *Das Weib des Pharaoh*, and others.

Of these films those which will be remembered in this country under their English titles are *Passion*, *Deception*, *Gypsy Love*, *One Arabian Night*, and *The Love of Pharaoh*.

In my personal remembrances of Lubitsch I shall never forget the pleasure it was to work with him. No script ever took us longer than six weeks. And the day's work was rarely more than a few hours. I confess that the number of cigars that went up in smoke was terrific. But although our actual periods of work were short, Lubitsch was so highly concentrated in his work that after a few hours he was exhausted. It was then that he invariably suggested that perhaps I was tired!

Of course by this time we no longer worked in cafe houses but hid away in mountain lodges.

An added pleasure to myself as writer was that every word of the final script was translated into action on the screen. Lubitsch never made changes once he began to direct. Consequently he resented improvised last-minute suggestions from actors.

Another pleasant memory was Lubitsch's constant sense of humor. He loved to play practical jokes on his friends. Emil Jannings, for example, had a horror of coffins. In *Du Barry* there was a scene in which a coffin was to be carried through the palace. Lubitsch pretended that the coffin was to be opened by Du Barry for a last fond farewell. Jannings quickly visualized the drama of such a touching situation and allowed Lubitsch to persuade him to lie in the coffin and have the lid fastened down. But once he had Jannings locked in the coffin, Lubitsch promptly called off the day's shooting. The studio was soon deserted except for Lubitsch who was spying on the coffin from behind the set. Nothing happened. When Lubitsch hastily opened the coffin he found Jannings as pale as a corpse, and furious at the trap into which he had been inveigled.

Although not religious in the conventional sense, nevertheless, Lubitsch never undertook an important action in his life, nor started a day's directing, without pausing for half a minute for a short silent prayer. Few people knew of this. He never spoke of it.

*Passion* and *Deception* led Lubitsch to Hollywood, under contract to Mary Pickford, to direct *Rosita*.

I remember the morning he left for America. When the ship sailed from Bremerhaven, carrying Lubitsch—the hope and pride of the German film industry—a small group of us were on the dock to wish him bon voyage and wave farewell.

His father was nearly in tears at the thought of his



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son going to California to a world of Indians, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, and countless other wild animals.

But Ernst Lubitsch was not to be lost in a wilderness. He was to gain new triumphs.

*HANS KRALY won the last Academy award for silent screen plays, in 1929. He is one of the earliest members of SWG, and one of the founders of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.*

### SAMSON RAPHAELSON

LUBITSCH loved ideas more than anything in the world, except his daughter Nicola. It didn't matter what kind of ideas. He could become equally impassioned over an exit speech for a character in the current script, the relative merits of Horowitz and Heifetz, the aesthetics of modern painting, or whether now is the time to buy real estate. And his passion was usually much stronger than that of anyone else around him, so he was likely to dominate in a group. Yet I never saw, even in this territory of egotists, anyone who didn't light up with pleasure in Lubitsch's company. We got that pleasure, not from his brilliancy or his rightness—he was far from infallible, and his wit, being human, had its lesser moments—but from the purity and childlike delight of his lifelong love affair with ideas.

An idea mattered to him more, for instance, than where his forkful of food happened to be traveling at a given moment. This director, who had an unerring eye for style, from the surface of clothes and manners down to the most subtle intonation of an aristocrat's heart, was, in his personal life, inclined to reach for the handiest pair of trousers and coat whether they clashed or not, to shout like a king or a peasant (but never like a gentleman) and go through life unaware of many refinements and shadings, with that clumsiness which is the passport of an honest man. He had no time for manners, but the grace within him was unmistakable, and everyone kindled to it, errand boy and mogul, mechanic and artist. Garbo smiled, indeed, in his presence, and so did Sinclair Lewis and Thomas Mann. He was born with the happy gift of revealing himself instantly and to all.

As an artist he was sophisticated, as a man almost naive. As an artist shrewd, as a man simple. As an artist, economical, precise, exacting; as a man, he was always forgetting his reading glasses, his cigars, manuscripts, and half the time it was an effort for him to remember his own telephone number.

However great the cinema historians will eventually estimate him, he was bigger as a person.

I doubt if a greater craftsman ever lived. I was enchanted with Charles Brackett's picture of Lubitsch arriving beyond the Pearly Gates, meeting the other show people, Moliere, Congreve, Shakespeare. Even if they had never heard of him, I know that in ten minutes he became one of them. I am sure that, as time goes on and they become better acquainted, many of them will feel as the mortal writers who really knew Lubitsch feel—that here is one who profoundly respects and understands the art of writing.

He was genuinely modest. He never sought fame or coveted prizes. He was incapable of employing the art of personal publicity. You could never wound him by speaking critically of his work. And somehow he never wounded his fellow-workers with his innocent forthrightness. If he once accepted you, it was because he believed in you. Thus he could say, "Oh, that's lousy!" and at the same time you felt his rich appreciation of what you hoped were your hidden virtues. A superb actor, he was totally incapable of acting in his human relations. He did not have one manner for the great and another for the lowly, one style for the drawing room and another for the bar. He was as free from guile and pretense as children are supposed to be, and this made him endlessly various and charming.

I am sorry I was never able to say all this to him while he was alive.

*SAMSON RAPHAELSON, one of Hollywood's outstanding writers for the screen, is also well known as a dramatist, novelist and short story writer.*

### STEFFIE TRONDLE

I had never met Ernst Lubitsch before and I would not have recognized the little man with the broad jovial smile and the twinkling eyes who entered the office one morning if it had not been for his trademark—the big, black cigar. Little did I realize then that it would be my privilege to be associated with him for nearly twenty years.

Ernst Lubitsch, the man with those wonderfully intelligent eyes, was an artist who wanted perfection in everything he did. His mind was so quick that often it was difficult to follow him. I recall how years ago a writer had been waiting for weeks for an appointment to tell him a story idea. When he came out of Mr. Lubitsch's office the man was upset. "Here I am waiting for weeks for an appointment, and after listening to me for five minutes he turns around and tells me the story."

I have always marveled at the memory he had. It

was not unusual for him to ask for a letter he had received maybe ten or fifteen years ago. Only the other day he asked for a paper he had signed about eight years ago. He was not sure of the name, but I was able to hand it to him without hesitation. "You see, I knew we had it." Whereupon I said: "And you see, I knew where to find it." We both laughed, satisfied with ourselves.

A conscientious and serious worker himself, he expected the same from all those who worked with him. He was always ready to excuse mistakes, but had no tolerance with anyone neglecting his duty. Few men in the industry ever had a more thorough knowledge of every phase of production than he. At a conference with the music department preparatory to *The Love Parade*, his first musical picture, I remember one of the men saying that they worked all night trying to figure out how one of the numbers could be handled. Mr. Lubitsch jumped up: "But gentlemen, that is so easy," and in a few minutes he explained to them how it should and could be done. It was this great knowledge and sureness that earned him the admiration and respect of all those who had the good fortune to work with him.

Surprising as it may seem, the master of sophistication was really a little boy at heart who loved to play tricks on others. I remember one morning at the time he was working with Messrs. Brackett and Wilder and Reisch on *Ninotchka*. I was late in getting to the office (as usual!) and they were already inside when I came. In the center of my desk I noticed a book. I took one glance at the rather lurid title and the picture of a scantily draped woman, shrugged my shoulders—and that was all. A minute later the door opened from the inside; Mr. Lubitsch stuck his head out and asked: "What's the matter, are you sick?" Then I learned that the four big men, like little boys had scrambled around to set the cap inside the book before I arrived and had been standing behind the door listening, expecting me to pick up the book and scream as the cap would go off. Mr. Lubitsch was a very disappointed man!

During the same picture the three writers had argued with him for hours, trying to convince him that he was wrong on one particular point in the story. Finally, he called me in and asked me what my reaction would be. With four pairs of eyes staring at me, I tried to think. And I shall never forget the look on Mr. Lubitsch's face when I finally answered — he was speechless. My reactions coincided with those of the writers. I had let him down.

Mr. Samson Raphaelson had come out to California last spring to work with him on *This Is The Moment*.

The two men had worked together on many of his scripts. They admired and respected each other and it was always a very happy and harmonious association. Although Mr. Lubitsch had an amazingly large vocabulary, he would come out and ask me whenever he was in doubt or at a loss for a word or phrase, despite the fact that Mr. Raphaelson had already supplied the word he was trying to find. I suppose it was a little irritating to Mr. Raphaelson at times, and we all had to laugh one day when Mr. Lubitsch asked me about some particular custom of that period and Mr. Raphaelson turned to his secretary and said: "You'd think she had lived at that time." The time was 1860.

For all his greatness, Ernst Lubitsch was a very simple man as far as he himself was concerned, and deeply appreciative of any kindness shown him. A box of cigars, or the cookies the little Hungarian lady would bake for him would please him no end. Like a little boy he would leave in the evening taking his present home with him. Despite all the lavishness in his pictures, he was a very simple and modest man as far as he himself was concerned. Last summer after having urged him for weeks to get some new clothes, he came to the office and said: "I was at the tailor and do you know what he has done?" ( I had visions that the whole suit had been botched up) "He made me *two* suits! And what could I do . . . I like them." I told him he hadn't had a new suit for three or four years and that the tailor probably decided he needed two new ones.

Much has been said and written about Ernst Lubitsch, the artist. But how much more there is to be said about Ernst Lubitsch, the man, and his enduring friendship and loyalty. A friend in need could always count on help from him. And as to his generosity there was just no end. "Only one package a month . . . oh no, the man should get at least two packages a month," he said to me only the other day. And that was only one of the many, many similar cases. Before the rise of Hitler, a trip to Berlin, to be able to meet at the Buehnenklub with all his old friends and former colleagues, that was the ideal vacation for Ernst Lubitsch.

But the most touching side in the man was his deep devotion to his small daughter Nicola, and his letters to her. The master of sophistication telling the little girl about her kitten and her dolls—how they missed her. No, Ernst Lubitsch was not a sentimentalist, but a little man with a great, big heart, whose memory will always be cherished by all who knew him.

STEFFIE TRONDLE was for many years  
Ernst Lubitsch's private secretary.



DARRYL F. ZANUCK

I shall always remember with great pleasure the strong conscience which Ernst Lubitsch brought to bear on every subject or problem to which he gave his attention.

He was a man of wit, but beneath his sense of fun was a stronger sense of sympathy and understanding for his fellow men.

He always lunched with his fellow producers, and it was a custom at these gatherings to argue principles and problems in our field of work and the larger field of human relationships. Frequently in these arguments Ernst was the dissenter. And we found, on reflection, that his dissents were based on a deep sense of right. He could see the other man's side of a question.

His ability to penetrate beyond a personal viewpoint was discernible in his work as well as his every-day life. It gave human qualities to the things he created

for the screen and to the direction of those creations. The actions of his characters in a play were motivated by what he could see they would think to be right. This to my mind is why they were so refreshing and different.

Added to this, of course, was his keen though always genial sense of humor. His sense of fun contained no malice; his eye, his hand and his mind were too quick and nimble for this. Where many men would let emotion guide their thought, he remembered that morals are too often a manner of thinking and of the times. His pictures and his style of direction point this up.

All of Ernst's colleagues at the Twentieth Century-Fox studio were stimulated by the association with him. The deep affection they held for him will not wane with time. His influence will continue to be felt at our studio family gatherings.

*DARRYL F. ZANUCK is the executive production head of the Twentieth Century-Fox studios.*



# The Economics of the Horse Opera

JACK NATTEFORD  
and LUCI WARD

*LUCI WARD and JACK NATTEFORD, although married and frequently teamed together, have earned many solo screen credits, including dramas and comedies as well as Westerns.*

LET us, pardner, begin with a clear understanding of what we are talking about. The term "horse opera" is not confined to the identification of the penny-ante efforts of shoe string producers; it includes also the most costly of Western specials, and in fact means any form of dramatic entertainment in which the actors wear the 80-pint Stetson hat and carry the surgical instrument known as the .45 calibre ventilator.

Our subject is all outdoor motion pictures, from those shot in five and one-half union days, to those costing millions of dollars and over.

Of course, we propose to discuss this broad field as a consumer of stories and scripts, as a market for the writer's material and services. This leads us at once to a fork in the trail, a moot point which has made this article difficult to plan, and slow to consummate.

Should we deal with the abuses in the horse opera market—as well as with the opportunities it affords?

Unquestionably, there are abuses of the writer in the lower paid portion of the field. That is common knowledge, shared by all Guild members who have worked on the committees that implement the contracts of the Guild with the major and the independent studios, and a knowledge frequently brought to the attention of those who have attended Guild meetings.

This article will not concern itself with those abuses, for the simple reason that a clear picture cannot be given if it is to be clouded with prejudicial material. One does not survey the business and finance of the Miracle Mile in terms of the shoplifting revealed by the blotter of the Wilshire Police Station.

Since most horse operas are made by production units of the leading major and independent studios, under the same executive management and the same policies of business integrity that govern their other operations, let us for the present assume that the

writer of horse operas tills a fertile field in a genial and beneficent climate.

Some of our readers may rear up to remark that so did Uncle Tom and his people, way down South in the land of cotton.

NOW that the situation has been clarified to our own satisfaction, if not that of anyone else, let us proceed to survey the wide open spaces which are the range of the horse opera, with an eye to the gold in them thar hills.

We find three distinctive forms of the horse opera, which are, in the order of ascending production cost:

1. The standard series Western, of low or average budget.
2. The big-star series Western, much higher budget.
3. The big-time Western special, top budget.

The standard series Western, most numerous of all, is sub-divisible into two classes:

Those which star one or more personalities of established but limited box office value, and

Those starring new or coming personalities who are being groomed for leadership in their field.

Both these classes may be considered together because they are made at the same moderate production costs, and are merchandised by the same distribution methods. There is, however, an important difference in the writing.

At first glance, the entire standard Western group would seem to present a profitable field for the writer. In it he finds at least four studios, each operating two or three standard Western units, each unit a customer for six or eight scripts a year.

These various standard series are all about equal in commercial value. If the box office drawing power



of any one were much lower, it would be dropped from the list; if higher, it would have to be up-graded into the big star category.

A surprising number of these standard series pictures are made by the same directors, specialists in their business, who move from series to series as employment presents itself. The casting is also uniform—there are only so many one-take heavies who can kick a dog with convincing gusto, and they work in most of the series.

So do the same horses, on the same locations, and so do the same dance hall dames, in the same key sets.

By now, it is apparent to the discerning reader that there is only one variable left to keep the standard series Westerns sufficiently differentiated to compete with each other.

Of course, that is the writing.

In view of its importance, why are the economics of the writer in this field lower than in any other branch of the motion picture industry?

Many answers can be given, and all are cogent.

It is in this field that abuses are most cited, but we do not feel that these abuses can be corrected, nor can issues of long standing be resolved, by discussion in the columns of a magazine.

Providing there were no abuses, providing the fairest of trade practices prevailed under existing contracts, we should still find many deterrent factors operating to the writer's disadvantage.

One is the size of the pay-check. What increases have been granted to writers, have not been commensurate with the higher cost of living and with tax deductions.

Another is seasonal employment. The only way the producer can control the budget, which is literally written into the shooting script, is to work closely with writer and director. During the months of poor shooting weather, he is available for this purpose. Hence the experience of writers in this bracket, that many of them are at work during the winter, nearly all in the early spring, and very few during the summer and early fall, when the producer is afield on location.

Another is the sheer difficulty of the job itself. Even the most generous and fair of producers must bring his script in at a pegged story cost, or throw his entire budget out of balance. The result is a communicated pressure upon the writer, working week to week, with the frequently observed end product of exhaustion or illness, both economic factors.

Speaking of the difficulties of the job, it is not generally realized among writers that a very high order of originality—or a reasonable facsimile thereof—is demanded of the standard Western writer. He is given

a theme which has been treated, literally, thousands of times before, and is required to say something new and fresh and stimulating about it, to say it with the minimum of dialogue and the maximum of physical action and pantomime, and then to wrap it up in exactly so many script pages and so many shooting days.

Never have so many done so much to make the camera set-ups so few.

Within this field, of course, the opportunity for economic advancement is limited by the pegged story cost. When a writer's salary advances beyond this point, his services become a luxury which the field can no longer afford.

THE same is true over in the next corral, where the oncoming young Westerners are being groomed and trained for big-time action. The story cost peg is still there, but it is notched higher. The paycheck is larger and time allowances more generous, because the scripts must fit the growing star with the well-tailored perfection of his costume. Story costs, and in fact all production costs, are not considered merely as expenses, but also as investments in the star's future.

There is greater continuity of employment, writing is more of a year 'round occupation than a seasonal chore, and the writer who shows a sympathetic understanding of the star's potentialities can even come out of the dry summer months, as the stockmen say, in good coat and condition.

Under these circumstances, the horse opera writer can find his economic condition quite comfortable, and can even enjoy, as the star's career advances, the illusion of professional progress.

Now time has passed, and under the magic touch of good writing, clever direction, shrewd production and relentless showmanship, a chunk of living clay has become a living legend.

He is not only a full-fledged Western star, he is also a box office champion.

In order to understand how that box-office affects the economics of his writers, it is necessary to digress into distribution.

The star's pictures are still sold, like any other horse operas, to the theatre on flat rental. Of course there may be one or two "specials" added to his yearly program, and while these go out on higher terms, they are still flat rental to the theatre, not percentage of gross box office receipts.

As frequently happens in a starring series, the individual pictures of certain writers, directors, and even producers (where more than one handles the star) may do far better at the box office than the average of the series.

It is natural for writers, and the other talent concerned, to feel that they are entitled to economic up-grading as a result of having written, directed or produced a picture which does (and this has been done) 150% of normal box office business for the theatres.

They are unaware of the fact that the added revenue remains with the theatres, which have booked the series at a flat rental.

No funds have come back to the studio as a result of their superior abilities. They have made money for exhibition, but not one added dime for production, which is their end of the industry.

Even the biggest of starring horse operas are marketed by the flat rental sales system, which the theatre owner or chain manager insists upon because it is advantageous to him. On the basis of his experience with the ability of Hollywood to create outdoor entertainment, he prefers to gamble on a flat rental. He bets against the possibility that the star's pictures will do less than 100% of his normal business, which probably includes the box-office take on re-issues and foreign imports.

Also, he doesn't want to surrender control of any part of his own business. Big starring Westerns have long been part of his defense against percentage booking. If he has to percentage them too, they're out.

Out also is the possibility that superior creative ability, in any department of the standard or the star series horse opera field, can be reflected in immediate economic reward to the contributors. The best picture in any series, sold on flat rental, returns approximately as much as the worst.

Therefore, story and script costs remain pegged, even though within generous limits. When it is taken into account that a top-drawer Western star is already pre-sold to a saturated market, it will be realized that there is no logical reason why his studio should pay any more for a better story than for a merely acceptable story.

Of course they would like the better story, but they don't need it to the point where necessity can materially affect economic determinism.

Once the big series Western star is pre-sold to every possible theatre (and he wouldn't be a box office champion if he were not) the studio needs a better story no more than it needs direction by Capra or production by deMille. A better story will not book the picture in one or more house, nor will it return one more dollar to the studio.

Therefore, the writer in the big star series field is apt to find his best achievements apparently unappreciated and unrewarded, and shares a feeling of frustration with all the writers of horse operas in the standard Western group, whose economics are like-

wise affected by the same method of distribution.

Nor, may we add, is this situation peculiar to the writer. It also affects the director and the producer, the latter usually a salaried employee whose status differs from the writer's only by the enjoyment of a long-term contract.

SO far, but for the possibility of up-grading themselves into directors and producers, it may seem that we have left the writers of horse operas nowhere to go, in terms of professional and financial progress. Except, possibly to a point just beyond the far end of the San Pedro breakwater.

In a more optimistic mood, let's talk about the third species of horse opera—the big-time Western special budgeted at from three quarters of a million dollars upward.

Billed above the title, we usually find the names of free-lance stars who have found it more profitable to work by the picture rather than by the week.

This lump-sum arrangement is also more attractive to the producer, representing as it does a ceiling over star cost, which might otherwise drag out through months of bad weather.

At present the stellar personalities in this field cost the producer of the big Western special from \$75,000 per picture to \$250,000, with the old reliables safely in the middle.

This free-lance star cost is assessed by the agents, and paid by the studios, on the basis of box-office drawing power already established.

When a star in this field shows increased box office power, the result is more competition and higher offers for his services. This may seem gratuitous information, but contrast it with the fact that the star-series star, under long-term contract to one studio, his pictures pre-sold, can double his box office power without bringing another dime of immediate revenue to his studio.

In that statement there are economic implications for the writer.

Now for distribution methods: the Western special is big enough to be sold on percentage, and usually goes out with a sock campaign of publicity and exploitation behind it, to pile up grosses in the key cities.

After the splash campaign, the picture is released to the trade at rentals based upon what it has already done in the key situations.

If it has done 140% of normal business, it is a bargain for the neighborhood theatre owner at 125% of normal rental, and that is about the least he can hope to book it for.

Out of every dollar it earns on percentage and on straight booking, a large part goes directly back to



the producing studio. On the books, this revenue is credited to eventual profits—and those credit items can be very important to the writer, even though he has already been paid off and dismissed.

All of our readers may not be aware of the fact that the accounting department is the final evaluator of talent. When deciding upon the employment or re-employment of writers and directors, the shrewd executive does not hazard an opinion. The books of his studio or those of some other to which he has access, will show the financial value of any certain writer or director or star, in terms of the profits or losses of the pictures to which he contributed.

Because the free-lance star evaluates himself according to this system, it seems natural to the producer, as it really is, to extend the system to other creative talent.

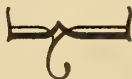
If the writer or director asks a raise, the producer can grant it with the justification of records proving that value is due for value received. And the same records will justify a new employer (who usually has grapevine access to them) in coming through with a little upward boost on the ante.

When a star of proved box-office average suddenly outgrosses himself by 50% or 75% above normal, the shrewd executive knows it was not a better star who made the increased profit, it was better writing, production, direction and support. Or at least, creative talent that better realized the latent possibilities of the star.

Apply the same factors to an outstanding star series production, sold on flat rental, and the books will show only a little better than average net receipts to the studio. Superior creative talent has earned nothing plus, and the books evaluate it accordingly.

The conclusion is, of course, that the evils which militate against the writer in the standard and the star-series Western fields are inherent, not in the base human nature of producers who also suffer from them, but mostly in the failure of a flat-rental sales system to accurately reflect the value of talent contributions.

The big-time Western special, the horse opera with the million dollar feed bag, affords the writer a greater opportunity for economic progress, principally because its distribution methods more accurately reflect the earning power of its contributing talent.



# Seeing Red

F. HUGH HERBERT

*Writer-Director F. HUGH HERBERT is a vice-president of SWG. He is the author of many screen and radio plays, and of such famous stage plays as Kiss And Tell, The Poseur, There You Are, Carry Me Upstairs and the current Broadway hit, For Love Or Money.*

I came down to breakfast the other morning in a perfectly normal frame of mind. As usual, I glanced under the table to make sure there were no microphones or concealed agents from the Kremlin; I hastily removed a bowl of peonies whose color (red) was offensive to me; I reprimanded my children who had contracted colds, and whose noses (red) were dangerous and subversive; and, then, thanking God for that great courageous defender of the faith, Mr. William Randolph Hearst, I opened up a copy of his Los Angeles *Examiner*, serene in the knowledge that I would not be contaminated by any filthy Communist propaganda.

To say that I choked on my kippered herring, as I glanced at the headlines, would scarcely be an exaggeration. Oh, well, a *slight* exaggeration, then, because as a matter of fact I never *touch* kippered herring. And I don't mind telling you why, either. I'm a one hundred per cent blue-blooded American (not *red*-blooded, you will kindly note) and, to me, all herrings are suspect and subversive because of the famous, or should I say infamous relative, the well-known *red* herring, which is constantly being dragged across your trail and mine, and across the trail of our innocent children.

Anyway, I choked on *something* as I read the most sinister and alarming headlines that ever drove a hard-working reactionary into a cold sweat. But there it was, in heavy type, right on page one of the *Examiner*.

## TY POWER GIVES UP LANA TO FIGHT REDS

Well, I don't mind admitting that I reeled, and if anyone wants to know how it is possible for a man to reel while seated at breakfast I'll thank him to shut his subversive mouth. I have my constitutional rights

and I'll answer that question only if as and when some great patriot like J. Parnell Thomas puts me on the stand.

Which gets me neatly onto the subject of J. Parnell Thomas and his stand, and it is to Mr. Thomas that my plea is really addressed. Mr. Thomas, I *demand* that you investigate Ty Power immediately. You have assumed the burden of investigating un-American Activities, and you are doing one hell of a job—and this should be right up your alley. Lana Turner, Mr. Thomas, is just about as American as apple pie and cheese, and a damn sight nicer to look at or have around. She is the dream of every red-blooded (oops! sorry—*blue*-blooded) one hundred per cent American man or boy. She is the biggest and brightest star in the star-spangled banner. She is what *I* fought for, and what my sons fought for, and what you fought for—or *did* you fight? She is Miss America, Mr. Thomas, and the sooner you nail that slogan to your stand the less trouble we're going to have.

And *now*, Mr. Thomas, what do we read in the Los Angeles *Examiner*—where our innocent little children can be corrupted and degraded even on page *one*? We read that Ty Power *gives up* Lana. He had this exquisite, stirring, symbol of all America's hopes in his hands, to love, cherish and take to Mocambo—and he gives her up. If *that* isn't un-American, Mr. Thomas, if that isn't subversive, if that isn't just plain *lousy*, I'll eat my hat, or even *your* hat, the one you've been talking through.

And what excuse does this despicable, treasonable character offer for spurning Lana? He says he's going to fight the Reds. It is to laugh, Mr. Thomas, if you'll pardon a foreign expression. Can't he fight Reds and have Lana, too? Wouldn't the love of a good woman help him? Doesn't he *need* it? Couldn't she contribute



blood, tears, toil and sweater? But Ty gives her up and tells the world about it—cad that he is. Or, worse yet, Mr. Thomas, is Mr. Hearst implying that Lana wouldn't *want* to help Ty fight Reds?—the dirty, cowardly, insinuating *beast*?

Investigate Ty Power, Mr. Thomas, investigate him as you have never investigated anyone before. Or, if you're too busy, give Eric Johnston a buzz,

and have him threaten to resign unless Ty Power is expelled from the industry he has disgraced and vilified. Save us, Mr. Thomas, save our free American way of life, save our democracy, our homes, our little kiddies. Save the American people—and, if you possibly can, save Lana for *me*. With a woman like that by my side, I'll fight Reds, whites and blues—with one hand tied behind me.



## On Leaving an Office Long Occupied

TO the writer who comes after,  
I bequeath the unborn laughter  
Of pleasantries producers didn't like.  
And the breath of my enthusing  
Over lines that no one's using,  
And the feeling of a disconnected mike.

And I leave the ghosts I cherished  
Of the characters who perished,  
All the shades who threw no shadows on the screen.  
Don't be startled by their stirring,  
As demurring their interring.  
They speak bitterly of things that might have Breen.

But I do not mean to grieve you  
With the legions that I leave you,  
Your hosts will not be hostile to your ends.  
Fellow writer be not daunted,  
Though the house is surely haunted,  
It is haunted by such old familiar friends.

—ANON

# Outside U. S. A.

ROBERT PIROSH

ROBERT PIROSH, a member of SWG, for many years a screen writer in Hollywood and Paris, herein describes the problem presented to him of making an American version of René Clair's film, *Le Silence est d'Or* (*Man About Town*) without the use of dubbed dialogue or sub-titles.

IN the last couple of years, members of the Screen Writers' Guild have plied their trade in England, France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden and Germany. This post-war invasion of Europe is sometimes referred to as "Operation Hand-in-the-Till"; and as a veteran of two overseas junkets I would be the last to belittle the advantages, both practical and spiritual, of seeing the world on an expense account. Released from the usual preoccupation with money, the mind soars to loftier heights, worthy of the expatriate artist. One can dine on oysters and partridge at La Tour d'Argent, and enjoy the view of Notre Dame with princely disregard for the astronomical figures on the right-hand side of the menu. One can even derive undisturbed, esthetic pleasure, perhaps for the first time in one's life, from the magnificent typography of the food and wine cards in the better-class cosmopolitan restaurants.

Nevertheless, and I think this has been said before, money isn't everything. There are many other factors which make an assignment in Europe an extremely stimulating experience.

First, there is the challenge to find new ways of presenting foreign pictures to American audiences. A number of our studios have tidy sums in accumulated profits in blocked currency. Despite recent international agreements which give the impression that all such funds have been unfrozen, there still remain considerable amounts which can be withdrawn in only one way; that is, by spending the money in Europe on pictures which will bring back dollars to this country. Dubbed versions of foreign films have proven unacceptable, and sub-titled pictures attract a limited audience. The answer is pictures slanted toward an international release: bilingual pictures and special versions prepared for the American public.

My last assignment in Paris for RKO-Pathe Cinema was a frankly experimental one; to prepare an American version of René Clair's *Le Silence est d'Or* (*Man About Town*) without the use of dubbed dialogue or sub-titles. René Clair believes, and even insists, that the director must work closely with the writer from the very inception of the idea of a picture, so he and I had many discussions during the preparation of the script. Our script for the American presentation was *complete* before he had shot the first scene of the French version. The plan was to introduce Maurice Chevalier, the star of the picture, in an English-speaking prologue, and then to carry his voice in English on the sound track of the French picture, putting in a word or two of explanation now and then to explain what was going on—a sort of verbal sub-titles.

If American box-office receipts show that this is the right approach, there will be other presentations like it. Otherwise, further experiments will almost inevitably lead to the correct method of breaking down the language barrier so that motion pictures can again be a truly universal medium, as they were in silent days. In either case, there will be a continued demand for American screenwriters in Europe.

One point must be emphasized. Bilingual pioneering must be carefully planned in advance, before and during the writing of the script. Our English narration, for instance, could not have looked like anything but a careless patched-up job if we had merely tacked on a soundtrack to the completed French product. Many scenes had to be shot two ways in order to allow pauses where the English voice could come in. Scenes with a great deal of French dialogue were planned to allow for clean cuts in the American version. An effort was made to substitute pantomime for



talk wherever possible. I feel sure that any other bilingual system must also be planned in advance by director and writer, working in close collaboration.

**W**ORKING conditions in Paris are sufficiently similar to those in Hollywood to make you feel at home, and I understand from writers who have worked elsewhere in Europe that this applies to all film capitals. On the set, the language is the only thing that seems different. An actor is an actor, just as a rock is a rock. A technical problem is the same in any language. The script girl, the cameraman, the sound men, all seem to be cast according to type.

I had mentioned this to René Clair and decided to prove it to him one day on the set at Joinville. I asked an American actor who was visiting the set to see if he could guess what jobs certain people were performing. He spotted the script girl, the costume designer and the wardrobe mistress. It was uncanny. Then he spotted the cameraman, which wasn't so uncanny because the cameraman was at that moment swinging past on a boom and looking through the finder. However, without any clues, he did manage to identify many of the workers. He finally came a cropper in surmising that a mild-mannered gentleman waiting to see the director was either a bit player or an assistant in the accounting department.

The gentleman happened to be the producer of the picture! If Mr. Clair had a few moments he would very much like to talk to him. Something about the budget. Rather important, but if Mr. Clair was too busy. . . . At your convenience, Mr. Clair. Yes, Mr. Clair. Ah, Mr. Pirosh, nice to see you, sir!

When was the last time a producer said "sir" to you? Well, they say it in France to directors and writers. And that is perhaps the most refreshing difference between working conditions there and here. I don't say that entirely as a criticism of the producer system in our own industry. The point is that the production of motion pictures in France is *not* an industry. It is a small business; or, more accurately, a commercialized art. As such, it is in the hands of creative people; directors, writers, and to a far less extent, actors.

I referred to the meek, courteous producer on the set at Joinville. He may have been the *régis seur gé né ral*, the *administrateur*, or the *directeur de production*. I am not sure which he was because I had so few dealings with him; as a matter of fact, I can't tell you exactly what those three titles mean. You will find all three in small type on the credit cards of French motion pictures, and they all have something to do with production, but the all-powerful producer as we know

him in Hollywood simply does not exist in France. The nearest thing to it is the entrepreneur who gets a commitment with a director and arranges for financial backing and a release. He has nothing to say about story, and very little to say about cast or budget. He can't change lines or re-cut the picture when the director has completed his job, can't even make a suggestion unless he prefaces it with a deferential, "Of course, you know best, but do you think it would be better if . . . understand, I'm not saying that what you have isn't wonderful, but . . ."

It is significant that the final shooting script is neatly done up in a permanent spiral binding. If you want to put in a blue page, you can't just take out three staples and replace the old page. You have to send the script back to the bindery and have it all done over again. This never causes any delay in shooting, because there aren't any blue pages. Final means final on a French script.

The European director is king, and the writer is heir apparent. However, unless the writer has the talent and the inclination to direct, he will always be in this subordinate position and his chances of achieving any real importance are little greater than his chances in Hollywood. It was rather discouraging to note at the International Film Festival in Brussels that not a single writer was mentioned except in connection with the one award for screenwriting achievement. Nevertheless, if we must remain anonymous, I for one would rather be in the shadow of a director than a producer. The director is in a far better position to appreciate and value our contribution, and to be sympathetic to our demands for more recognition.

**T**HE producer is not the only individual you will find it difficult to identify on a French set. You will be surprised to find eager youngsters, who look like messenger boys and girls, in earnest conversations with the director, cameramen and other key men, and to learn that they are student directors, cameramen, script girls and cutters, products of a highly successful school known as the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Cinématographiques*. The IDHEC, run by French motion picture workers with a certain amount of backing from the government, is open to anyone who can pass the rigid aptitude tests. Men in all creative and technical fields contribute their services as instructors. Promising pupils are assigned to work on actual productions, with no functions other than to observe how their type of work is done by experts. On the Clair picture, there were two student directors, one of whom had just written and directed a sixteen millimeter short in Southern France under the auspices of the school. Not

only is there no tuition fee, but needy cases are given subsistence pay. The diploma comes in the form of a union card.

Once having obtained that union card, the IDHEC graduate need never fear intimidation or discrimination. All film workers belong to one union, the *Syndicat des Techniciens de la Production Cinématographique*, a strong subsidiary of the national labor federation. On each picture, one man is elected to represent all employees. On *Man About Town*, it was the assistant cameraman, and if the director wanted to work overtime, he had to ask his permission. Honest! I saw it happen. And the assistant cameraman, who had just brought in a sandwich for the first cameraman, thought it over carefully and approved the request. Not working overtime in this instance would have caused considerable expense to the studio, so it seemed like a reasonable demand. Had it been deemed unreasonable, the director would have been forced to bow to the authority vested in the assistant cameraman.

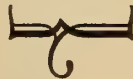
One of the most stimulating features of working in France is the total absence of censorship. There is no prurient blue-pencilling, no restriction except self-imposed standards of good taste. This is certainly a challenge to come up with something a little more true

to life than the Cinderella story; and if it occasionally leads to a line which might be considered censorable in Ohio, you just plan to have it shot another way in the American version. Lack of censorship is in itself, of course, no guarantee of adult entertainment. The French, too, have conventions which lead to formula stories, but there is a difference which was brought home to me in a conversation with Marcel Pagnol.

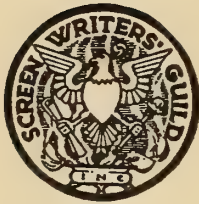
"There are really only two plots in pictures," he said. "One, a boy is in love with a girl and they are prevented from having an affair. That's tragedy. Two, a boy is in love with a girl and they have an affair. That's comedy."

He cited many examples to prove his point, but it was just as easy for me to find examples among American pictures to prove that exactly the opposite is true over here. We accept it as *comedy* if the boy is frustrated in his desire, and as stark tragedy if he makes the grade, for the girl is certain to have a baby and everybody suffers from then on, including a large proportion of the audience.

Today, when Hearst and others are openly advocating further censorship of the screen, assignments outside U.S.A. offer a more compelling attraction than ever before.







## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT: SHERIDAN GIBNEY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, GEORGE SEATON; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, F. HUGH HERBERT; 3RD VICE-PRESIDENT, DWIGHT TAYLOR; SECRETARY, ARTHUR SHEEKMAN; TREASURER, HARRY TUGEND. EXECUTIVE BOARD: ROBERT ARDREY, ART ARTHUR, STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY, CLAUDE BINYON, CHARLES BRACKETT, FRANK CAVETT, OLIVE COOPER, VALENTINE DAVIES, RICHARD ENGLISH, EVERETT FREEMAN, PAUL GANGELIN, ALBERT HACKETT, MILTON KRIMS, ERNEST PASCAL, LEONARD SPIGELGASS. COUNSEL, MORRIS E. COHN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALICE PENNEMAN.

## E D I T O R I A L

IN reporting to the membership on behalf of the Executive Board, it is my unhappy duty to inform you that never has the Guild been involved in a worse mess, a mess not of our making but of the times in which we live and more directly of the industry in which we work, affecting management and labor alike and all guilds and unions equally, and therefore one that the Screen Writers' Guild alone cannot possibly solve. It was unfortunate that the new Executive Board was tossed this hot potato by Mr. Johnston almost immediately upon taking office; and yet the sharp challenge of the issue had one salutary effect—it forced the new Board to weigh and ponder deeply the Guild's moral and constitutional responsibilities to its membership as well as its stake in the motion picture industry. I want to give you a brief summary of these deliberations in order that every member can be as fully apprised as possible of the problems that face us, but before doing so I think a detailed review of events as they have occurred will be helpful.

On Monday, November 24th, the new Board held its first meeting. We were aware that the Producers likewise were holding a meeting in New York and had been advised that a statement regarding the Communist question in Hollywood would be forthcoming. On Tuesday I had luncheon with George Stevens and Ronald Reagan at the Players to discuss the situation. In the middle of luncheon a Producers' representative called from New York and talked to each of us separately. He sounded very upset, said that the statement the Producers were issuing wasn't going to be liked by the guilds, and pleaded with us to withhold any action until he could explain the reasons for the statement and the Producers' real intentions regarding it, whereupon Stevens, Reagan, and myself agreed that the three guilds would refrain from

issuing individual statements until every effort had been made to arrive at a joint statement on a tri-guild basis.

On Friday we were invited to meet with the Producers' policy committee comprised of Mr. Mayer, Mr. Rathvon, Mr. Wanger, and Mr. Cheyfitz, representing Eric Johnston. The meeting took place in Mr. Mayer's office and was attended by Ronald Reagan for the Actors, William Wyler and John Ford for the Directors, George Seaton, Harry Tugend, and myself for the Writers. The Producers' committee said that the meeting had been called to acquaint guild representatives with the reasons for the action taken by them. The chief reason was that such adverse public opinion regarding the industry had been created by the hearings in Washington that some drastic steps had to be taken to counteract it or the box office would undoubtedly suffer. With this in mind the Boards of Directors of the various companies had insisted upon the discharge of those cited for contempt in the belief that this would improve public relations for the industry. For the same reason they had taken the position that the industry would not employ Communists. The committee wanted to work out a way for protecting innocent people so far as their jobs were concerned and had no desire to engage in a witch-hunt. It appealed to the guilds to help the Producers prevent so-called innocent people's being injured. The Producers' committee added that they had made the unanimous decision that each studio and each producer was to decide whether or not a person was to be employed and that there wasn't going to be an industry ban on anyone. They were also unanimous in their decision to fight the Thomas Committee if and when it should resume its investigation and not to yield another inch. The guild representatives pointed out that they could not support the Producers in the position they had taken and that the guilds most certainly could not act as screening agencies.

This meeting lasted five hours and was followed by an emergency Board meeting of the Screen Writers' Guild which Reagan and Wyler attended. At this meeting both Reagan and Wyler agreed that the three guilds were in this together and should try to formulate a joint statement and a common course of action.

On the following Wednesday the entire Executive Boards of the three guilds met again at Metro, this time with the full committee of the Producers. We were again assured that the Producers did not intend to bar people from employment merely on suspicion or hearsay. The Producers all agreed that the guilds would have to take a stand in opposition to the Johnston statement, but they hoped that it could be couched in such terms as not to bring down upon the battered brow of the industry another storm of adverse public opinion.

With these imponderables to weigh, the three Boards began holding separate meetings to seek a solution that would be consistent with their respective constitutions and the laws of California and at the same time not destroy their organizations. As these meetings progressed, it soon became apparent that tri-guild unity on this question was not likely to succeed.



ACCORDINGLY, the present situation appears to be this: Each guild is waiting for the other to lead with its chin and to take the first onslaught of adverse publicity. For admittedly the three guilds face precisely the same problem and must eventually, I think, take the same position. But the moment the Screen Writers' Guild condemns, as it must in accordance with our constitution and the State Labor code, the discharge of its members for political beliefs and activities not forbidden by law and the setting up of blacklists and the proposed political screening of all employees in direct violation of the law, a vast section of the press and radio will not hail us as the champion of civil liberties but with screaming headlines "SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD DEFENDS COMMIES."

I would like to review for a moment how the Guild got into this situation. It began with Mr. Thomas' trip to Hollywood in June when Mr. Johnston and various self-appointed defenders of the industry assured Mr. Thomas that the industry would welcome his investigation and cooperate in every way possible. Mr. Thomas never approached the Screen Writers' Guild for information or advice in this matter nor did he in any way seek our official cooperation. However, some of our members volunteered to assist him and made certain allegations against the Guild and its membership that were greatly exaggerated and for the most part unsubstantiated. At the Washington hearings they reiterated these charges and created in the minds of the public the impression that if we were not a subversive organization, we were the next thing to it. Then came the testimony of the so-called unfriendly witnesses who created in the public mind by association a link between the Screen Writers' Guild and the Communist party by refusing to divulge their membership in either organization. They further took the position that they were defending our members against the threat of censorship or even the very existence of the Guild itself. They neither consulted the Guild on this course of action nor were they asked nor empowered to speak on its behalf. The Guild had only one official spokesman in Washington to protect its interests and that was Emmet Lavery.

It was now the Producers' turn to save the industry and the people working in it from the threat of federal censorship and loss of revenue by announcing to the nation that they would fire the people cited for contempt and refrain in the future from hiring Communists. The Guild again was not consulted in this matter but merely presented with an accomplished fact. The Producers then sought the Guild's help in a situation involving its own members and in which it had not participated. The Producers admitted that they might be acting illegally but, in the absence of any law defining Communism as subversive, they had had to take steps to save the industry. In the interest of better public relations of the industry they proposed for the future that an industry council be set up to be composed of representatives of the three talent guilds and the Producers' Association to handle such matters. The Board took this proposal under advisement to be presented to the membership.

The Guild has thus become the victim of a series of unsolicited acts on the part of certain of its own members and the Producers alike and is put in

the position of having to defend its membership and oppose the Producers without further damaging the industry in the light of prejudiced and poorly informed public opinion. Speaking solely from the Guild's point of view, this is the problem we face.

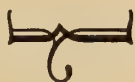
**I** SHOULD like to tell to you now, some of the conclusions that the Board has come to after much deliberation:

First, that the political issue of Communism cannot be ignored. In accordance with our Statement of Policy, the Guild has long made it a practice to concern itself with political matters that directly concern the economic and professional interests of screen writers, and the issue of Communism most certainly does. Any Communist or Communist sympathizer or any one suspected of being a Communist is in danger of not being employed. Because of the tenseness of the international situation or for whatever other reason you want to ascribe to it, the American Communist Party in popular opinion is suspect today. It has even been legislated against in Congress in the non-Communist affidavit provision of the Taft-Hartley law. Guilds and unions throughout the country have been seeking to disassociate themselves from alleged Communist leadership and the dictates of the Communist party line, and our Guild, as we have recently seen, is not immune to this pressure. Therefore, the Guild, in defending the right of a man to his own political convictions without jeopardy to his job, must also defend itself against the charge that it subscribes to those convictions.

Second, that the Guild has no responsibility to those of its members cited for contempt of Congress so far as their Federal trials are concerned, but that the Guild does have a legitimate interest in any civil suits they may bring against the producing companies for breach of contract.

Third, that the Guild is vitally concerned with any attempt on the part of the producing companies to institute a blacklist of any kind based on discrimination for political beliefs or activities not forbidden by law.

—SHERIDAN GIBNEY





## Book Reviews

ONE day someone finally got fed up with Gertrude Stein's delinquent nouns and told her, "A rose is a rose is no prose." With the coming of age of the screen writer I am pleased to see that there are among us those who can write prose and write it well, and put it into some of the best literature of our times.

It is no mere accident that the first three books reviewed here are the works of screen writers; and they are among the few works of real merit on the publishers' lists this season; second, I deliberately picked them out for I doubt if any of them will outsell such machine-made, scented oatmeal as now leads our best seller lists.

No American writer alive today creates a better poetic prose than Jo Pagano. No book club or monthly tripe mill has ever yelled "hurray" for him, but those few who read his brilliant tour de force *The Paesanos*, or his delightful *Golden Wedding* need to be told, here is a man, here is a writer.

His new book, *The Condemned*, is a masterpiece, and I use the word simply, in its original meaning, as defined by Samuel Johnson in his great dictionary.

It is a terrific novel of violence, and a relentless evoking of pity and horror as it hunts for an answer to the *why* and *how* of good and evil in man, in us, in our times.

It is, at first, simply a headline of a few years ago; two men kidnap a boy, kill him and are then lynched by a California mob properly indoctrinated with the best slogans.

On this cruel iron frame Jo has hung the golden prose poetry of haunting style, has strung it with the electric shock of wonder, terror and the charged atmosphere of the question of our time: "Society has per-

haps failed man and in failing him, why resorted to violence?"

Jo has written one facet of the story of our times, he has written of the texture and fabrics that have wrinkled our society, our world and has invaded our once treasured tranquility. This book brings to mind the writing of Dreiser, Dostoevski, "the skull beneath the skin" of the heroes of Stendhal. Yet the style, method and prose is purely personal to Jo Pagano, derived from himself and projected towards us to grasp. As he says on the last page of *The Condemned*, "I do not presume to know. It would seem that the answer, if it is to be found at all, must be found, as it always must be found, in the mind of the reader. . . ."

*The Boiling Point* is by Richard Brooks, who wrote *The Brick Foxhole* which, as we all know (except the R.K.O. advertising and production departments), came to the screen as *Crossfire*.

Here is a book not just for one fashionable publisher's season, and here is a writer, honest, stark and direct, hurling the thunderbolts of his method directly at his object, which is man himself. His every scene carries conviction that here we have a major American writer and not the biological freak inflated with Chanel No. 5 and pink gin at literary cocktail parties.

He writes earnestly and wonderfully of that unpopular thing: the essential truth. His men, his women face the vigorous, serious aspects of their lives with an intense and permanent conviction that the sap of life, the juices of existence must flow freely, and that life is to be lived with blazing power and intensity. How does the author do it? He has size, he has stature and he does not

fear to write scenes such as few writers ever dare put into their books.

He has freedom, for he serves no special pleading, no lunatic artistic fringe, no political dogma. Zola took his readers into the biological world of his characters, Brooks places them clearly, without fingering, in a historic content. Aldous Huxley used to pin his people to the board like dying butterflies, Sinclair Lewis painted their noses red and crossed their eyes for laughs, and Mr. Hemingway's figures always seem to be outfitted and very beautifully, too, by Abercrombie and Fitch. (Ah, those hand-made shotguns and leather-bound flasks.) But the world of Richard Brooks seems to suddenly come into focus as if picked up unaware, as if photographed in its native habitat by telescopic lens.

Only a writer who has struggled for this effect can understand how skillfully the people of *The Boiling Point* belong to their story. They seem like attitudes out of Michaelangelo caught on paper.

I hope both these novels outsell the historical grab bags, the dreary rape of carbon copies of Scarlett O'Hara, and the works of literary geldings piddling themselves in the borrowed trousers of fashionable conversions from Proust to Freud.

But I doubt it. The novel as an art form is dying (I can hear someone, the morning *Robinson Crusoe* is published, saying, "The novel is dying.").

The fungus of the printing press; the publishers, have just announced they can no longer afford to print a novel that doesn't sell at least ten thousand copies. This means goodbye to William Faulkner, James Farrell, and a few other writers who have managed to get up off their knees; they rarely sell more than two or three thousand copies of their original trade edition.

**D**eath on Horseback, *Seventy Years of War for the American West* by Paul I. Wellman is, as far as I know, the only complete history of our Indian wars in the West, and to my way of thinking a much better work of research, scholarship, respect for material and the English language than the over-touted *The Big Sky* (the best boys' book of the year—ages 12 to 16) and the very interesting but much over-written *Across the Wide Missouri* of De Voto.

Few of us really know that from *Jubal Troop* to *Bowl of Brass* Paul Wellman's influence on western writers, historians, motion picture directors and script writers has almost made the western movie authentic.

Bit by bit Western "experts" have helped themselves to his material; a chapter on the Colt revolver out of his *Trampling Herd* (a remarkable history of the cattle trails), a suggestion of a theme from *Broncho Apache*, a whole scene from *Angels With Spurs*.

Paul Wellman is a solid historian who does not depend on standing his prose on its head for its effects, and he avoids the errors of most western historians on such subjects as Billy The Kid, the height of buffalo grass and the first appearance of the Sharps' rifle on the frontier.

His history of the futile struggle of the Indians to retain their homes and hunting grounds against the encroaching real estate agents, football stadium builders and Native Sons of the Dance Hall Gals is a moving and bitter panorama of clashing civilizations brutalizing each other.

This book is unbiased, coherent and unsparing of the evils we have done to the only native American, the

Indian; putting him on the nickel is indeed a mocking repayment for the massacres, brutality and exploitation of a genuine, natural and nonmechanical culture.

Wellman makes it quite clear that a race and a culture, in its pure form, may be complete in itself, contain its own art, poetry, religion, and life force and yet perish under the superior killing power of an invader who comes to exploit and deprive it of its birthright. One thing *Death On Horseback* makes crystal clear: our civilization is only superior to Indian culture on certain levels; the tribal cultures rarely produced the neurotic complications of our times, or the flux and flow of chaos that throws many an individual today into lonely darkness by himself, cut off from contact with his time and era. Every Indian *belonged*; his family, his clan, his tribe, and his nation was not jingo surface patriotism—it was the reason for his birth, life, and usually, death. No one could send him "back to where he came from," not even the D.A.R.

**T**HE next two books I shall write of here are not the work of screen writers. I bring them up now because I was rather amazed to hear that last year only a few original screenplays were submitted to the studios.

There is therefore room in a much untapped field of screen writing and I want to present here two projects for screenplays. The first is *The Hooded Hawk*, a life of James Boswell, by D. G. Wyndham Lewis, a scintillating, stimulating life of the man who spent a lifetime on his own, *Life of Samuel Johnson*. In a wild and remarkable period, at a time when

the English speaking world was emerging into greatness, James Boswell, lover, lecher, great writer, drunkard, traveler and maker of heroes, moves through his own remarkable saga on our earth. Any facet of his life and loves and adventures would make an outstanding screenplay.

The other book is a huge canvas, something that can become an American *Zola*, a New World *Forsythe Saga*, a sort of *War and Peace* of the making of Americans. It is the *The James Family*, a group biography of Henry James, Sr., William James and Henry James. Here are the most wildly discussed figures of our times (in certain circles). All we are, and perhaps shall be, are somewhat the result of the lives and times of these odd, peculiar and certainly remarkable men.

It is, from any cinema angle, a powerful family story; it is new material never touched before on the screen; here are the full lives that are a challenge to those of us screen writers who say that screen entertainment can be made even out of intelligent material, and without dragging in the frontier marshal or a "private eye" who lives on racing forms and two-word sentences.

I have picked these two biographies deliberately. I present them as ideas for screenplays because I doubt if any real producer will turn them down for production if they are honestly presented in full screen form. I doubt if treatments or outlines will do.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

Stephen Longstreet, who is a member of the SWG Editorial Committee, has been appointed Book Editor of *The Screen Writer*.





# Correspondence

## Letter From London

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)

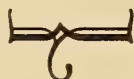
reconquest of Burma without enlisting the services of MR. ERROL FLYNN. There is, in fact, only one Hollywood product for which no amount of ingenuity can ever provide a substitute, only one loss which we must steel ourselves to writing off as irrevocable; and that is the Hollywood version of life in Great Britain.

"And what a loss it is! Never again to see that enchanted or at any rate transmogrified land, wrapped almost all the year round in a dense fog—that will indeed be a deprivation. It was a land which we had all learned to love, for not only had glimpses of it redeemed many a bad film from dullness but it had a quaint, dream-like charm all of its own. Its House

of Commons (in which SIR AUBREY SMITH almost always sat, often as a Duke), though generally rather smaller than our own, was infinitely more animated as well as being better lit; it is indeed scarcely possible to recall a session which was not rendered historic by the *dénouement* of some major international crisis. Its policemen, barely discernible as they patrolled the fog-bound streets, resembled our own; but their helmets were slightly different, they never took their thumbs out of their belts, and the only traffic they were called on to regulate was an occasional hansom cab. Its aristocracy were, though not particularly powerful, numerous and, though stupid, generally condescending; they often had beautiful American daughters. They lived in castles of the very largest size and were much addicted to sport, particularly fox-hunting. This was normally carried on in the height of summer (fog being perhaps less prevalent at that

season), and though much of the densely wooded and often semi-precipitous country appeared unfavorable to the sport as we know it, the rather small packs never had a blank day.

"The lower orders, a cheerful lot, wore gaiters in the country, but in London, being mostly costers, dressed in a manner which befitted this calling. The Army, except of course in war time, consisted almost entirely of senior officers, most of them in the Secret Service. There were two universities, one at Oxford and the other at Cambridge. Cricket and football were not played much and—possibly as a consequence—there was a great deal of crime. But it was a wonderful place, and the only general criticism which can be levelled at the inhabitants is that when, as frequently happened, they met an American they betrayed an almost complete lack of understanding of the American way of life."



## News Notes

★ The N. Y. Museum of Modern Art's 1948 History of the Motion Picture Program will have daily showings at 11 West 53rd St., N. Y., at 3:00 and 5:30 p.m., on Thursday evenings at 8 o'clock. Current January programs are: *When Tomorrow Comes*, 1939, Jan. 5-11; *Rebecca*, 1940, Jan. 12-18; *Since You Went Away*, 1944, Jan. 19-25; *Spellbound*, 1945, Jan. 26-Feb. 1; *The Life of an American Fireman*, 1903, Feb. 2-8.

★ *Declaration*, a play on Jefferson in the Alien and Sedition Act period,

written by SWG members Janet and Philip Stevenson, will be produced by the Actors' Lab. in mid-January.

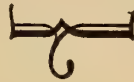
★ Associate SWG member Donald Wayne has sold a series of four articles to *Holiday*. The first, *The Wild West*, will be published in the March issue. Mr. Wayne has just signed a contract with *Scribner's* for a novel, tentatively titled *See By This Image*.

★ SWG member Robert Watson was guest speaker at the annual convention, 1947, of the Canadian Authors

Association held at Vancouver, B.C. His talk, *The Writer's Hollywood*, was reproduced in the latest issue of *The Canadian Author and Bookman* for the perusal of members unable to attend the convention. Watson helped to form the association some 27 years ago and is a past-president and past-national treasurer of that organization.

★ *Pencil In the Air*, by the late Sam Hoffenstein and published only two days before his death, is now among the best-selling books of light verse.

- ★ SWG member Leonard Hoffman now has a monthly column, *Scratching the Surface*, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*. The column deals with musical activities throughout the country.
- ★ SWG member Peter O'Crotty's first novel, *Malibu Cove*, is scheduled for spring publication by Murray & Gee.
- ★ Gordon Kahn, former editor of *The Screen Writer* and Hollywood correspondent for the *Atlantic Monthly*, considers the hazards of gardening and Japanese gardeners in Beverly Hills for the December issue of that magazine. The first of his articles on Mexico is published in the January *Holiday*.
- ★ Robert Sherwood Blees has a short story, *Midnight Visitor*, in the current *Cosmopolitan*.
- ★ Janet Stevenson's short story, *Citizen Velasquez*, will appear in an early issue of *Reader's Scope*.
- ★ SWG member Stanley Richards' one act play, *Through A Glass, Darkly*, has just been selected as one of the ten best one act plays of the year and will be published in the Dodd, Mead & Co. annual volume, *The Best One Act Plays of 1947-1948*, edited by Margaret Mayorga. His play, *District of Columbia* was published in the 1944 edition of this annual.
- ★ The Pasadena Community Playhouse announces that the Kenyon Nicholson-Charles Robinson comedy, *Apple of His Eye*, holds down the third position of the Winter quarter, dated Jan. 14-25, under Michael Cisney's direction. Farmer Sam Stover's search for the fountain of semi-youth is the chief concern and there is an "apple" in Sam's eye in this May-to-December comedy.
- From the 1946 New York season comes the comedy, *Made In Heaven* to close the Playhouse list from Jan. 28-Feb. 8. Lenore Shanewise directs.
- ★ SWG member John Wexley will be in London for the major revival of his play *The Last Mile*, for English theatre goes. While in England he will confer with Carol Reed, director, on their plans for a new film production. Wexley will spend several months in London, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Berlin.
- ★ *Angel Face*, the new play by SWG members Sloan Nibley and Steve Fisher, will have its premiere January 14 at the Las Palmas Theatre, with John Howard in the lead and Felix Feist directing.
- ★ Howard Hunt, associate member of SWG, has a new novel, *The Lash*, scheduled for June publication by Farrar, Strauss & Co. The locale is largely Acapulco where he recently spent a year as a Guggenheim Fellow in Creative Writing.
- ★ H. Arthur Klein, screen writer, director, producer and publicist, announces the organization of Pictures, Ltd., at 141 N. Orange Dr., Hollywood, for the production of documentary films. He has recently written, directed and produced *Old Man Atom*, *People's Program*, and a picture dealing with the California fishing industry.





A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

OCTOBER 1, 1947 TO NOVEMBER 1, 1947

A

**ART ARTHUR**

Joint Story and Joint Screenplay (with Lillie Hayward) **NORTHWEST STAMPEDE**, Eagle-Lion

B

**EDWARD BOCK**

Joint Screenplay (with Maurice Tombragel) **THE RETURN OF THE WHISTLER**, Col

**CHARLES G. BOOTH**

Original Screenplay **THE BALLAD OF FURNACE CREEK**, Fox

**GEORGE BRANDT**

Sole Original Screenplay **UNUSUAL OCCUPATIONS**, L 7-1 (s) Par  
Sole Original Screenplay **POPULAR SCIENCE**, J 7-2 (s) Par

**JOHN BRIGHT**

Sole Screenplay **JOE PALOOKA IN FIGHTING MAD**, Mono

**BETTY BURBRIDGE**

Sole Screenplay **TRAIL OF THE MOUNTAINS**, Bali Pictures, Inc.  
Sole Screenplay **WHERE THE NORTH BEGINS**, Bali Pictures, Inc.

C

**J. BENTON CHEYNEY**

Sole Original Screenplay, **PHANTOM VALLEY**, Col

**LEWIS CLAY**

Joint Screenplay (with Royal K. Cole, Arthur Hoerl and Harry Fraser) **TEX GRANGER** (Esskay Pictures) Col

**ROYAL K. COLE**

Joint Screenplay (with Arthur Hoerl, Harry Fraser and Lewis Clay) **TEX GRANGER** (Esskay Pictures) Col

**MONTY F. COLLINS**

Additional Dialogue **JOE PALOOKA IN FIGHTING MAD**, Mono

**RICHARD CONNELL**

Joint Screenplay (with Gladys Lehman) **LUXURY LINER**, MGM

D

**VALENTINE DAVIES**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Elick Moll) **YOU WERE MEANT FOR ME**, Fox

**LUTHER DAVIS**

Sole Screenplay **B.F.'s DAUGHTER**, MGM

**ALBERT DEMOND**

Sole Screenplay **MADONNA OF THE DESERT**, Rep

**PHILIP DUNNE**

Sole Screenplay **ESCAPE**, Fox

E

**HENRY EPHRON**

Joint Screenplay (with Phoebe Ephron and Peter Milne) **APRIL SHOWERS**, WB

**PHOEBE EPHRON**

Joint Screenplay (with Henry Ephron and Peter Milne) **APRIL SHOWERS**, WB

G

**PAUL GANGELIN**

Sole Story and Joint Screenplay (with Sloan Nibley) **UNDER CALIFORNIA STARS**, Rep

H

**EDMUND L. HARTMANN**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Frank Tashlin) **THE PALEFACE**, Par

**LILLIE HAYWARD**

Joint Story and Joint Screenplay (with Art Arthur) **NORTHWEST STAMPEDE**, Eagle-Lion

**F. HUGH HERBERT**

Sole Screenplay **SITTING PRETTY**, Fox

**CARL K. HITTLEMAN**

Joint Story (with Harold Klein) **WHERE THE NORTH BEGINS**, Bali Pictures, Inc.

**ARTHUR HOERL**

Joint Screenplay (with Royal K. Cole, Harry Fraser and Lewis Clay) **TEX GRANGER** (Esskay Pictures) Col

**NORMAN HOUSTON**

Sole Original Screenplay **THE ARIZONA RANGER**, RKO

**EDWARD HUEBSCH**

Story Basis **THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS**, Col

J

**FORREST JUDD**

Sole Adaptation **SIXTEEN FATHOMS DEEP**, Mono

K

**ROBERT E. KENT**

Sole Original Screenplay **GAS HOUSE KIDS IN HOLLYWOOD**, PRC

**HAROLD KLEIN**

Joint Story (with Carl K. Hittleman) **WHERE THE NORTH BEGINS**, Bali Pictures, Inc.

**HOWARD KOCH**

Sole Screenplay **LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN**, UI

L

**JONATHAN LATIMER**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Charles Marquis Warren and William Wister Haines) **THE LONG GREY LINE**, Par

**GLADYS LEHMAN**

Joint Screenplay (with Richard Connell) **LUXURY LINER**, MGM

**RALPH LEWIS**

Joint Story (with Bernard D. Shamberg) **JOE PALOOKA IN FIGHTING MAD**, Mono

**JAN LUSTIG**

Sole Adaptation **HOMECOMING**, MGM

In this listing of screen credits, published monthly in **THE SCREEN WRITER**, the following abbreviations are used: COL—Columbia Pictures Corporation; E-L—Eagle-Lion Studios; FOX—20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; GOLDWYN—Samuel Goldwyn Productions, Inc.; MGM—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios; MONO—Monogram Pictures Corporation; PAR—Paramount Pictures, Inc.; PRC—Producers Releasing Corporation of America; REP—Republic Productions, Inc.; RKO—RKO Radio Studios, Inc.; ROACH—Hal E. Roach Studio, Inc.; UA—United Artists Corporation; UNI-INT'L—Universal-International Pictures; UWP—United World Pictures; WB—Warner Brothers Studios. (S) designates screen short.

## M

**AL MARTIN**  
Character Basis MY DOG RUSTY, Col

**HAROLD MEDFORD**  
Sole Screenplay BERLIN EXPRESS, RKO

**WINSTON MILLER**  
Additional Dialogue THE BALLAD OF FURNACE CREEK, Fox

**PETER MILNE**  
Joint Screenplay (with Phoebe Ephron and Henry Ephron) APRIL SHOWERS, WB

**ELICK MOLL**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Valentine Davies) YOU WERE MEANT FOR ME, Fox

**THOMAS MONROE**  
Joint Story Basis (with Billy Wilder) A SONG IS BORN, Goldwyn

## N

**SLOAN NIBLEY**  
Joint Screenplay (with Paul Gangelin) UNDER CALIFORNIA STARS, Rep

## O

**PAUL OSBORN**  
Sole Screenplay HOMECOMING, MGM

## P

**ROBERT PIROSH**  
English Adaptation MAN ABOUT TOWN (Societe Nouvelle Pathe Cinema) RKO

**GEORGE PLYMPTON**  
Sole Story TEX GRANGER (Esskay Pic.) Col

## R

**JACK ROSE**  
Additional Dialogue THE PALEFACE, Par

**TIM RYAN**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Edmond Seward and Gerald Schnitzer) ANGEL'S ALLEY, Mono

## S

**WILLIAM B. SACKHEIM**  
Joint Story (with Brenda Weisberg) MY DOG RUSTY, Col

**BARRY SHIPMAN**  
Sole Original Screenplay ROSE OF SANTA ROSA, Col

**CHARLES SHOWS**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with William Scott) HOME SWEET HOME (s) Par

**CURT SIODMAK**  
Sole Story BERLIN EXPRESS, RKO

**LESLIE SWABACKER**  
Sole Story TRAIL OF THE MOUNTIES, Bali Pictures, Inc.

## T

**FRANK TASHLIN**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Edmund Hartman) THE PALEFACE, Par

**MAURICE TOMBRAGEL**  
Joint Screenplay (with Edward Bock) THE RETURN OF THE WHISTLER, Col

**MAX TRELL**  
Sole Screenplay SIXTEEN FATHOMS DEEP, Mono

## W

**JACK WAGNER**  
Joint Screenplay (with John Steinbeck and Emilio Fernandez) THE PEARL (F.A.M.A.—Aguila) RKO

**CHARLES MARQUIS WARREN**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with William Wister Haines and Jonathan Latimer) THE LONG GREY LINE, Par

**BRENDA WEISBERG**  
Joint Story (with William B. Sackheim) and Sole Screenplay MY DOG RUSTY, Col

**BILLY WILDER**  
Joint Story Basis (with Thomas Monroe) A SONG IS BORN, Goldwyn

**FRANK WISBAR**  
Sole Story MADONNA OF THE DESERT, Rep

**AUBREY WISBERG**  
Sole Original Screenplay ROAD TO THE BIG HOUSE, Screen Guild  
Sole Screenplay THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS, Col

## Y

**CARROLL YOUNG**  
Original Story and Screenplay TARZAN AND THE MERMAIDS, Sol Lesser Prod

## NOVEMBER 1, 1947 TO DECEMBER 1, 1947

## B

**EDMUND BELOIN**  
Sole Screenplay A CONNECTICUT YANKEE, Par

**MURIEL ROY BOLTON**  
Sole Story MYSTERY IN MEXICO, RKO

**NORMAN BORISOFF**  
Sole Screenplay THE CHILDREN'S REPUBLIC, Documentary, Carroll Film Co.  
Sole Screenplay A MATTER OF TIME, Documentary, Carroll Film Co.  
English Commentary THE EIFFEL TOWER, Documentary, Carroll Film Co.  
English Commentary OLYMPIC PREVIEW, Documentary, Carroll Film Co.

**OSCAR BRODNEY**  
Sole Screenplay ARE YOU WITH IT?, U-I

**PETER R. BROOKE**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Jack Roberts) PARIS IN THE SPRING (S) Par

**JOHN K. BUTLER**  
Sole Story THUNDER IN THE FOREST, Rep

## C

**ANNE MORRISON CHAPIN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Whitfield Cook) THE BIG CITY, MGM

**J. BENTON CHENEY**  
Sole Screenplay (THUNDER IN THE FOREST, Rep

**HARRY CLORK**  
Joint Screenplay (with N. Richard Nash) THE SAINTED SISTERS, Par

**WHITFIELD COOK**  
Joint Screenplay (with Anne Morrison Chapin) THE BIG CITY, MGM

## D

**HERBERT DALMAS**  
Original Story THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN, WB

**KAREN DE WOLF**  
Joint Story (with Connie Lee) THE RETURN OF OCTOBER, Col

**DECLA DUNNING**  
Story Basis I, JANE DOE, Rep

## E

**IRVING ELMAN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Frank Gruber) THE CHALLENGE (Reliance) Fox

**CHESTER ERSKINE**  
Sole Screenplay ALL MY SONS, U-I

## F

**MELVIN FRANK**  
Joint Screenplay (with Norman Panama) THE RETURN OF OCTOBER, Col

**DEVERY FREEMAN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Frank Tashlin) THE FULLER BRUSH MAN, Col

## G

**KENNETH GAMET**  
Sole Screenplay CORONER CREEK, Producers Actors Corp.

**FRANK GRUBER**  
Joint Screenplay (with Irving Elman) THE CHALLENGE (Reliance) Fox

## H

**LILLIAN HELLMAN**  
Play Basis ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST, U-I

**NORMAN HOUSTON**  
Sole Original Screenplay WESTERN HERITAGE, RKO

**ROY HUGGINS**  
Story Basis THE FULLER BRUSH MAN, Col

**IAN HUNTER**  
\*Contributor to Screenplay UP IN CENTRAL PARK, U-I

## K

**ABEN KANDEL**  
Additional Dialogue THE BIG CITY, MGM



**LAWRENCE KIMBLE**

Sole Screenplay I, JANE DOE, Rep  
Sole Screenplay MYSTERY IN MEXICO, RKO

**HARRY KLEINER**

Sole Original Screenplay THE STREET WITH  
NO NAME, Fox

**HARRY KURNITZ**

Joint Screenplay (with George Oppenheimer)  
THE ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN, WB

**L****JONATHAN LATIMER**

Sole Screenplay THE SEALED VERDICT, Par

**CONNIE LEE**

...Joint Story (with Karen De Wolf) THE  
RETURN OF OCTOBER, Col

**MINDRET LORD**

Adaptation THE SAINTED SISTERS, Par

**M****ARTHUR MARX**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Jack Roberts)  
GYPSY HOLIDAY (S) Par

**N****N. RICHARD NASH**

Joint Screenplay (with Harry Clork) THE  
SAINTED SISTERS, Par

**O****GEORGE OPPENHEIMER**

Joint Screenplay (with Harry Kurnitz) THE  
ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN, WB

**P****NORMAN PANAMA**

Joint Screenplay (with Melvin Frank) THE  
RETURN OF OCTOBER, Col

**SAM PERRIN**

Joint Play Base (with George Balzar) ARE  
YOU WITH IT?, U-I

**VLADIMIR POZNER**

Sole Screenplay ANOTHER PART OF THE  
FOREST, U-I

**R****WALTER REILLY**

Adaptation THE VELVET TOUCH, (Independent Artists) RKO

**JACK ROBERTS**

Joint Original Screenplay (with Peter R. Brooke)  
PARIS IN THE SPRING, Par (S)  
Sole Original Screenplay JINGLE JANGLE  
JINGLE, (Par.) (S)  
Sole Original Screenplay SAMBA-MANIA,  
Par. (S)  
Joint Screenplay (with Arthur Marx) GYPSY  
HOLIDAY, Par. (S)

**LEO ROSTEN**

Sole Screenplay THE VELVET TOUCH, (Independent Artists), RKO

**T****FRANK TASHLIN**

Joint Screenplay (with Devery Freeman)  
THE FULLER BRUSH MAN, Col

**LAWRENCE E. TAYLOR**

Sole Original Screenplay DEVIL SHIP, Col

**LAMAR TROTTI**

Sole Screenplay THE WALLS OF JERICHO,  
Fox

**KARL TUNBERG**

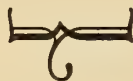
Sole Screenplay UP IN CENTRAL PARK, U-I

**W****PAUL I. WELLMAN**

Novel Basis THE WALLS OF JERICHO, Fox

**ROBERT C. WILLIAMS**

Sole Original Screenplay OKLAHOMA BADLANDS, Rep



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DR. ARNOLD WELLES

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Hollywood in Retrospect

PETER LYON

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Creative Immunity

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# The Screen Writer

## UNEMPLOYMENT II: An Agent Speaks Up By

H. N. SWANSON, With An Editorial Foreword

KEN ENGLUND: *Quick! Boil Some Hot Cliches*

DONALD BULL: *Screenwriter vs. Film*

DAVID CHANDLER: *Diary of a Dupe Addict*

BARTHOLD FLES: *The Current Literary Market*

DON HARTMAN: *Two Heads Are Worse Than One*

NORMAN LEE: *Hollywood! You've Been Warned*

Editorial • SWG Studio Chairmen • Book Reviews

News Notes • SWG Studio Committees • Reports

Screen Credits





# Gunn Shots

By JAMES GUNN

JAMES GUNN, *SWG* Editorial Committee member, will henceforth conduct the following column — calling his "SHOTS" as he sees them.

DESPITE THE man's last three credits, there is no truth to the rumor that David O. Selznick will fire his chief writer.

THROAT - AND price - cutting have reached a new low in the 16 mm. field, not covered by Guild contract. A writer recently turned out an original screenplay for a Western feature, and was paid \$500 flat. The grateful producer offered her \$250 for a second. When she refused, he turned to his script girl, who now grinds out complete screenplays at \$100 per.

SO HELP us God, last month an independent producer, with three unsatisfactory scripts already on his shelf, was trying to hire a writer to adapt Wilkie Collins' *Woman in White*. The picture finished shooting at Warners about eight months ago.

PHOEBE EPHRON is obviously not afraid of pre-natal influence. Her third child, expected in early spring, has been sitting in at story conference with Jerry Wald and Bill Jacobs.

THE DIFFERENCES in taste between English and American audiences, particularly as to comedy, is cropping up again. A while back, the English were surprised at the big American reaction to *Tawny Pipit*, which hadn't caused any great stir in the home country. Now the English writer-director, Norman Lee, puts in a plug for Paramount's *The Bride Wore Boots*, which now is mentioned in Hollywood only by producers trying to get the unfortunate actors to cut their salaries.

*SISTER ACT*, announced as a purchase by Milton Sperling, is the original on which the old *Four Daughters* was based. If it starts the same cycle over again, God forbid.

*Continued on Page 14*

# The Screen Writer

Vol. 3, No. 9

FEBRUARY, 1948

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# Unemployment II

*Last month we mentioned that the problem of the screen writer today is what to do until the agent calls. In this issue the agent has called . . . and if the news isn't good, it's at least honest. Mr. Swanson calls his shots as he sees them. Whether he is right or wrong is something this membership will find out during the coming year. But as we are always haunting our agents for the hopeful word that we are "hot at Paramount" the agent should have the same privilege of haunting us with why, like it or not, it just ain't so.*

*The latest box score of the Screen Writers' Guild is: Unemployment is just fair. No one has died but no one has become a new man either. As of December 19th last, there were 928 active members. 408 were employed in major and independent studios. That sounds great but some of the members were on partially deferred salary jobs. 374 members were looking for employment, and 146 were unavailable, either out of town or working on other things. Of our 518 associate members only a handful were employed.*

*Now we turn the floor over to Mr. H. N. Swanson.*

. . . . . EDITOR

---

## An Agent Speaks Up

H. N. SWANSON

*H. N. SWANSON has long been one of Hollywood's top literary agents. He was particularly well qualified for this specialized field, coming to it after a distinguished career as editor of College Humor. His first three years in Hollywood were as a producer at RKO Studios.*

I KNOW a very good writer who hasn't worked in eleven months. He has made over a million dollars from the picture industry in the past ten years. (That's not very much for a top man—only two thousand a week.) He doesn't get as many credits as he used to, but he has worked steadily. All during the war years, and right after, he was just bumping along on the ties, quietly making his hundred thousand a year and worrying less about his scripts than his pedigreed dogs. I doubt if he sees more than one picture a year; when he does, he has difficulty identifying these newcomers, like Gregory Peck and Robert Meeker, or Mitchum—some name like that. He ain't workin', and it's his fault. Competition for jobs is too keen for

producers to bother about him and his lazy mental attitude.

An Academy Award winner of recent times had four agents and one short job during 1947. I suppose they all represented him simultaneously. He tells everybody he meets, who might have an angle on a job, that if they will put in a pitch for him and it results in a job he'll take care of them handsomely. When this Joe Desperate *does* go to work next, I'm sure that half of the agents in town are going to be very busy hitting him and each other over the head, demanding their commission.

Out of work for months and months is a great



## THE SCREEN WRITER

writer of blue-sky scenes. A specialized kind of sheen is demanded of dialogue spoken by a boy and a girl under an apple tree in bloom, with the wind in her hair. This scenarist was one of Hollywood's famous last-minute dropkickers, a lad to be run in to save a script when things looked blackest, when a star refused to do the God-damned thing or a director told the producer to shove it. He got very fancy money, usually on a flat deal basis. His job was to give everybody confidence, to settle their nerves. He'd end up writing two or three love scenes with words so warm and wonderful that they would glow in the dark. He's still the same guy he always was: as pleasant and pleasing as warm apple pie. He can write as well, or better, than ever before. He's out of work now, and it's only partly his fault. The fashion has changed and he hasn't quite caught the meaning of it. Studios now want one man, to whom they usually have to pay a thumping big price, to do the whole script so well it doesn't need tampering with later. The old-fashioned producer, who insisted on writer following writer to "polish," was responsible for a series of costly scripts being written and put on the shelf, like layer on top of layer of an expensive wedding cake. Every time a man gets from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars *to do a screenplay*, which usually goes right into work, he automatically throws dozens of Screen Writers' Guild members out of work. It's pretty rough on the other writers, but we all know this is the proper way to make pictures.

I know an Eager Beaver who can write comedy with fizz, pop, sparkle and real jump. You can listen to one of his scenes and almost always call its authorship correctly. He's in demand. He's a hot kid. But personally he is very mixed up. His life has a skeletal deposit of many expensive divorces, second mortgages on Beverly Hills homes, attachments on automobiles and checks that have to be put through more than once at banks. Living better than kings do these days, he has always been just one jump ahead of the sheriff. I expect him to have a nervous breakdown any minute because he won't change his way of life, won't reorganize his overhead, won't see that a screen writer can't operate on such a small personal margin as he once did.

**I** COULD go on giving examples. The point I want to make is the Hollywood writing market in many respects is like the stock market. On the New York Exchange, in a bull market, the securities of many companies sink lower and lower; likewise in a bear market there are always stocks with such inherent worth and earnings potential that they ignore the down trend and increase in price. Thus you continually have

a market of individual stocks, rather than a thing loosely called a stock market.

In these months, bad for screen writers in general, we have seen a handful of men whose salaries and compensation and percentages and bonuses have jumped phenomenally. They are wanted, for one reason or another. In 1948 they should make more money than writers have ever before taken out of the business.

I tell all my clients that less than one hundred men and women will do Hollywood's entire product during 1948. I admit there will be marginal jobs on little pictures that get made here and there, but I still say that less than one hundred men will write all the supers, the A's, and even the B's. My job as an agent is to get as many of my clients as I possibly can into this winner's circle and keep them there.

Whenever we can get a person in demand, we can improve his compensation, his working conditions and his standing in this business. I don't care what is happening to foreign grosses, the domestic box-office, the current political scene, the tax situation, or whatever. When they really want a lad, no matter what, the money is bound to be okay. It's as simple as that.

Studio executives keep saying that pictures are now costing so much that the writer's pay will have to come down, or they simply can't operate. I don't think it will until theatre tickets decline from a dollar back to thirty-five cents again. We are in an inflation cycle. This complex situation of rising prices for almost every item can only be remedied when the curve, representing the cost of everything, again turns down.

The working writer these days has every justification for getting more money. *He's got to be good to be working; let's face it!*

While 1948 will be the greatest year in the industry for the few writers at the top, I feel that the lowest third are faced with a hopeless situation. The lunatic fringe, if you will pardon the expression, will be towed twenty miles to sea during this year and quietly disposed of.

**I** KNOW of no industry with such an enormous backlog of unemployed workers as the picture business has in relation to its writers. Almost all of the current unemployed never worked in boom times. Most of these people would be better off selling insurance again or running their parking lots, instead of clinging so desperately to the thought that somewhere, sometime, the studio gates will open to them. Certainly the industry would be better off without these marginal fellows. They are the ones responsible for most of the unfounded plagiarism suits against the studios. They are the ones who load down an executive's day

with appointments that could never possibly mean anything. They elbow their way into the overcrowded lists of many agents. They are stage struck. They wear those funny shirts and read the trade papers standing up at Schwab's Drug Store, and consider themselves part of an industry that never has and never will recognize them. . . . The industry owes them no obligation whatsoever. They should get out of town Before It's Too Late, My Love.

For the great middle class of working writers (and almost everybody belongs in this group) the situation is serious but by no means critical. I'm talking about the people who have been writing most of Hollywood's product in the past. They will reappraise values, do a little belt tightening, and keep going. You acquire a certain cat-like quality to your footwork when you write for a producer who changes his mind weekly. I think these fellows will be all right.

This group offers a real challenge to the literary agent. After getting his boy to face facts, the agent must keep him pepped up, his spirits high and his mental pores open.

Every business man knows it costs more to operate a selling organization in bad times than good. We have found we must now spend more time with the individual client to examine what ideas he has, to try to point certain projects of his at definite studio situations. We have had to cut drastically our own list of clients. We need the extra time to attempt to channel the willing workers into other markets.

It is silly to try to crowd a man who has never written for magazine publication, for instance, into doing fiction unless he is willing to acquire a specialized knowledge of what each magazine requires. You just can't let a man sit down and write an article on "How to Make Your Own Toupee" and casually submit it for publication. He'll be shocked and hurt if it doesn't sell first time out.

We are encouraging folks to read more, in the hope they may want to option this or that book, play or magazine story.

A man with two-thirds of a good story would often like to meet somebody with an idea for a hot finish.

The agent often can reach for the telephone and help him.

THE story market continues to roar ahead. Oversupply of film adaptors, undersupply of stories to adapt. One major has re-done almost every picture on which they didn't lose money. Their corporate name should be changed to Remakes, Inc., or Here We Are Again Productions.

Does this effort pay off? Well, this kind of thing has been happening in the past few months:

Nat Nervous had an expensive home, a wife whose spending habits were firmly rooted, an overhead that would scare anybody. We told him to forget pictures for the moment, rent his house for a nice sum and take a radio job in New York. He's still there, and making more than twice his last Hollywood salary. He and his wife think it's fun living in a luxury hotel, eating oysters every night and going to the theatre steadily.

We found that one client was very high on a newspaper adventure strip, even knew how he'd make a picture out of it. We went after it for him.

One of America's top novelists had not written anything for a long, long while because the studios had been keeping him busy. Recently they didn't. Once he caught the idea that just because the industry had taken care of him in the past it didn't necessarily intend to in the future, he really got down to work. After two months he walked into our office with a new story which we feel is not only a great picture but certain to be a Book Club selection.

We had a man who came back from the war to find his credits were four years old. He didn't even want to be offered, didn't want to be asked "What have you been doing recently?" He had never done a play, but with a determined burst of work he soon turned out what is now a dramatic smash on Broadway.

Instead of our clients needling us in 1948 for supposed inactivity, we are going to needle them first into working for themselves. We feel this stimulation is not only proper and imperative, but it will be highly productive for us all.





# Quick! Boil Some Hot Cliches

KEN ENGLUND

KEN ENGLUND is a member of the SWG. Among his recent screenplays are *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty* and *Good Sam*.

ILLUSTRATED BY STEPHEN LONGSTREET

THIS is an *anti*-screenwriter article.

Dull pictures—formula product—assembly line thinking—bad box office! Not more than a couple of dozen films a year might even be called very good—or to stretch a point—excellent. About ten producers at the most make that old college try for a great picture. And in the lower echelon of artistic aspiration the ‘commercial’ surefire touch isn’t so surefire any more.

Who is to blame? Writers pin it on the sluggish routine imaginations of some top executives, the stale ‘Oh, hell, why not use it again—it was great in *It Happened One Night*, wasn’t it?’ approach of many producers; or the conditioned reflexes of some directorial hacks who have to go into a trance before each setup to remember how Flora Finch and Larry Semon used to do it. And we blame the ‘fornication *cannot* be fun—they *must* be PUNISHED!’ attitude of the Breen office. There is no doubt that the guilt for the present doldrums should be shared by all aforementioned but the writers, I believe, must come in for a large piece of justifiable opprobrium. Let us be objective enough to also blame ourselves, for the producers and directors, tired as some of them might be, do look to us for artistic stimulation and freshness.

The picture business can be likened to a Rube Goldberg cartoon depicting one of his mad Machiavellian mechanical inventions. In the panel at the extreme left, we see THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS representing THE STOCK HOLDERS. The CHAIRMAN raises a golden gavel—The gavel descends sharply hitting the large flinty brain of THE VICEPRESIDENT IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION; this sets off sparks that light the executive’s Upmann 15. The mile-long cigar blazes setting off a hot fire under the

seats of twenty-five dozing PRODUCERS. They spring to their feet and start beating their writers with tightly rolled trade papers or racing forms. In the last panel the writers are seen feverishly typing—many without sheets of paper in their typewriters—so anxious are they to stay on the job.

In re the author of this attack on what has sometimes been referred to as Hollywood’s oldest profession, Goethe said something apropos which I am too lazy to look up. But the gist of his thought was that ‘There is not one sin others have committed that I have not been guilty of—or that I am not capable of committing. So I cannot cast aspersions or pass judgment without including myself as sinner.’

Nevertheless the situation plainly calls for action. Let us roll up our sleeves and try to scrub some of those cobwebs off our celluloid. To get down to cases: There was a Geneva Convention to outlaw poison gas; can’t the members of the Screen Writers’ Guild get together to ban and consign to limbo, the following which I have tried to categorize?

## ROMANTIC DIALOGUE AND LOVE STUFF

“Listen, darling, they’re playing *our* song!”

“Violets! Oh, darling, you remembered!”

“Moss roses! You remembered—oh, darling!”

“White orchids with those *same* yellow throats with just a touch of burnt umber! Oh, you’re such a darling to remember!”

“Darling—this is *our* place!”

And at ‘our place’ let’s send to a Cain’s Warehouse for stale characters, the genial proprietor, LUIGI, the

## QUICK! BOIL SOME HOT CLICHES!

musical comedy Italian who is continually drooling toothily and lasciviously over the Boy and Girl, because he 'loves lovers' and incidentally wants to pad his part.

While we're still at Luigi's does the Boy always have to carve their initials on a Chianti bottle? Can't it be a Haig and Haig pinch bottle for a change?

### THE AQUATIC LOVE SCENE

The springboard the studio bought read: "And in the days that followed they drew closer and closer together. They dined, danced and swam together . . ."

In screenplay the Aquatic Love Scene results:

"Race you to the raft, Freddie!"

So saying, Maureen O'Hara playfully pushes John Payne into the water, dives in and a gay race ensues. Boy and Girl clamber onto the raft happy as playful porpoises laughing fit to kill. After they get tired laughing, he gives her a hard, intense, libidinous look and seals her mouth with a very long passionate kiss that holds till the Dissolve so that the screenwriter won't have to think up any dialogue.

Some years ago, by actual count, five Fox films used the Aquatic Love Scene. All they ever changed were the bathing suits, and once they added a little railing around the raft, but each time Payne (or Fonda) and O'Hara would race each other to it. Now, mind you, I am not for eliminating girls in bathing suits or the dramatic value of glistening white thighs bejeweled with droplets of water. I'm as oversexed as the next citizen. But let's dig a little, fellows. Maybe they could race out to a *bellbuoy*! You see what a little thinking can do to unearth that fresher angle?

### THE OUTDOOR OR AIN'T NATURE GRAND LOVE SCENE

The Girl in a tight white sweater takes a deep breath and looks around at the other wonders of nature and exclaims (after much coaching) "Oh, Timothy, isn't it beautiful—"

Timothy takes a look at her heaving sweater and exclaims back significantly, "Sure is!", and his meaning isn't lost on anyone. I believe we can drop for all time this giddy gambit, along with:

### THE NIGHT OUTDOOR LOVE SCENE

"Oh, Keith, darling—look—the stars are so close you could reach out and stir them around."

And

### THE BAR LOVE SCENE

The Girl: (sipping champagne timidly) "Oooohh! The bubbles tickle my nose!"

### THE BACKSTAGE MUSICAL

or

"When It's Cliche Time In Dixie I'll Be Digging Back For Ideas," or "Down Memory — or is it — Monotony Lane?"

Scene opens with a line of chorus girls in practice clothes practicing. Immediately the Dance Director calls out, "Take five minutes, girls," and they quickly disperse. After extensive research I have discovered that



Darling, they're playing OUR song!

dance directors in 'real life' always give the girls at least ten or fifteen minutes, so why can't Larry Parks, Gene Kelly or Dan Dailey do the same? Try and



## THE SCREEN WRITER

watch these little things, gang, they all add up to perfection.

And can't we do something about the circular iron ladder backstage, and that typical shot of the chorines descending? I know it's a dandy way to catch the back of the girls' legs, but can't we repaint the ladder, or something, or twist the iron the other way? Maybe this is a director's problem. Why not write your favorite musical director and suggest he get a new idea for chorus girls descending. I suggest you use a plain envelope and sign it, "You know who."

Oh—yes—How about giving the heave ho to all stage doormen named 'Pop'?

Dissolve to:

### *EXT. DRESSING ROOM DOOR OF STAR*

Stage Manager knocks and calls, "Five minutes, Miss Grable." Cut inside and Cesar Romero is proposing to her in a dressing room banked with more floral offerings than a vault at Forest Lawn—and the show has been running for two years!

### *THE STAR CAN'T GO ON AND THE UNDERSTUDY TAKES HER PLACE!*

Leo McCarey had the only practical suggestion for a new switch on this chestnut. The Leading Lady gets sick. The Understudy gets her big chance. All her dreams have come true. She runs, puts on her makeup and costume, and then as she descends the iron ladder, she trips coming down in all her excitement and breaks both legs. The show never opens.

Let's take an oath to do without:

### *ALL SHERIFFS STANDING IN THE WINGS IN THE LAST REEL TO:*

- a. Foreclose—because the leading lady hasn't paid Max Factor for her makeup.
- b. The leading man owes for his toupe.
- c. The show's lyricists were caught stealing the songs outright, and Tchaikowsky is standing in the wings with—Freddy Martin.
- d. The scenery has been surreptitiously borrowed from the Shuberts who are standing in the wings.
- e. Gangsters are waiting to shoot the comics if they come offstage, so they manage cleverly to blend in with the line of chorus girls—audience thinks it part of the act and splits sides.
- f. Joe Yule, Mickey Rooney's father, is waiting in the wings to close the show because he thinks his

son, Mickey, is too young to be in a Broadway musical, feeling he should stick to burlesque.

### *PASTERNAK-TYPE MUSICALS*

Can we safely eliminate the lovable, loyal, groveling servants who gleefully 'root for' and vicariously enjoy the budding romance of two adolescents as they experience the first pangs of puppy love? There is always a good deal of "Master Robert" this and "Mistress Elizabeth" that from Arthur Treackle — I mean Treacher and thirty-nine footmen all played by Christian Rub, who tiptoe in from time to time with nourishing gruel for each of the poor love-sick babes to keep up their strength. I have had two children and watched them through the trials of adolescent emotions, and



Don't worry — your brother will play the violin again.

my staff—one large, colored lady—remained coldly indifferent to said trials, only rooting for me to pay her on time. What's more she never tiptoed — she always woke us in the morning slamming pots around, and she was continually fighting with my daughter because she brought her boy friends home to dinner. So let's stick to facts!

## B MUSICALS

Swing versus the Classics! The Long Hairs versus the Crew Cuts! And that malodorous bromide where the kids in the orchestra segue sneakily from Beethoven to Benny Goodman when the hatchet-faced Principal isn't looking! Discovering their audacious prank she is at first outraged, then starts keeping time to the music. She can't help herself and neither can the helpless audience. If another screenwriter puts this on celluloid he should be flogged through the Guild.

EPICS, RESTORATION DRAMAS  
AND PERIOD PIECES

The leading lady is taking a bath in a tub or a rain barrel—a maid servant pouring in hot water. The bather looks up shocked to find that George Sanders has taken the maid's place and is now pouring.

There must be another way to show Paulette Goddard's pretty shoulders in relation to history without always resorting to this prairie bubble bath. Let's dig and maybe put Sanders in the tub and let Goddard pour it on him. But don't get overly particular and ask where she got the bubble bath preparation in the middle of the great outdoors.—There is a branch of Elizabeth Arden's at Fort Sill and the special soap is brought by Pony Express along with the gunpowder, pemmican, firewater to bribe Indians—and comic books for the extras on location.

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS (ERROL FLYNN) JR-TYPE  
PICTURES

In the middle of a duel to the death the two antagonists lock wrists and swap talk, their sweat-drenched faces only an inch apart. "Norman dog! Anglo Saxon lilies will grow over thy bones ere yon sun sets!" Snarling cheek to cheek this exchange of insults and plot points goes on for a half hour and finally they are down to saying, 'I'll bet my agent can lick your agent,' and the impression is created that the age of the actors has given them pause rather than the dictates of the story.

Under the same classification: a murrain seize the writer (or director) who plans a duel that takes the swordsmen through twenty-six rooms. It always appears as though the host was showing his enemy his castle with an eye to renting it rather than the motivation of running him through. Mamoulian staged the best and most realistic movie duel in "Mark of Zorro" in *one* room. The camera was continually on Power and Rathbone and they lost three quarts of blood between them—but it was worth it!

## SCREEN BIOGRAPHIES (NON-MUSICAL)

Can't we do without THE TEA SCENE?

## INT. STUDY — NIGHT

In the dim light of a student lamp Don Ameche is peering into a microscope. A clock wearily strikes three. Bong, bong, bong. Bette Davis enters carrying a tray containing a pot of tea. She says, "Goodness, John—stop a moment and have a cup of tea. You must have some rest. As it is, you'll get little enough thanks for inventing syphilis." He sighs wearily, takes off his glasses and answers: "But my dear Katrina, *someone*



Swing versus the Classics — or, So you need a quick melody, eh?

has to do it." He smiles bravely, she smiles bravely. After another brisk exchange of brave smiles, this TEA SCENE is interrupted by THE ROCK THROWING SCENE.

As the scientist sips his tea, several ROCKS come crashing through the study window. Ameche, in spite of his wife's fears for his life, goes out on the balcony and looks below to see a slaving mob of toughs led by Gene Lockhart, the town's leading skeptic. There



## THE SCREEN WRITER

are angry catcalls, more rocks aimed at the scientist's head, and unkind remarks that all add up to the belief that Ameche is in league with the devil and his dark machinations in the laboratory will bring ruin and the wrath of God down on all the inhabitants of Bad Gaswassar.

The very sight of Gene Lockhart in a biography telegraphs to the audience that he is going to set himself against whatever the hero is trying to perfect whether it be cellophane or falsies. He has become so immersed in this role of doubting Thomas that his agent tells me it has even affected Lockhart's private life. He has just had the phone taken out of his house, not wanting to risk his life by using the dangerous electrical device of that crackpot Bell! Now when he gets a studio call for a new job as screen skeptic his agent has to drive over to tell him about it.

### BIOGRAPHIES OF GREAT BROADWAY COMPOSERS (WITH SOCK ENTERTAINMENT VALUES INCLUDING CATCHY SONGS — HIGH KICKING AND CUTTING UP)

"Rita! I think I've got our fourth act finale—listen!"

And, without a word of warning, the tin pan alley Tchaikowsky leaps to the Steinway and ad libs what it took Hammerstein and Rodgers six months to compose. The Girl sings the chorus with him, *guessing* the lyrics in advance. They end on a kiss over the piano. Sometimes a playful kitten (on wires manipulated by five stagehands belonging to two warring unions) comes between them for the Dissolve. Or if he's an outdoor composer the Boy and Girl are on a horse and one of the horses' heads comes between them as they kiss. I'd even settle for the other end just for a change.

### THE FIGHTING ROMANCE

"Rosalind Russell is the new Boss Lady of an Advertising Agency, see—but Fred MacMurray, see, *doesn't KNOW* he's working for a *WOMAN*, SEE!? Because *HE HATES WOMEN* and he'd never have taken the job in the first place if he knew he was working for a *FEMALE*! He has a phobia about the opposite sex, SEE, because of a sad experience in his own life—his mother deserted him when he was only forty-two—SEE—but not knowing Rosalind is his *NEW BOSS*, he falls in love with her against his will—and that's when the fun begins!" And that's when, if the audience is smart, they'll just tiptoe out on the bicker-

ing couple, get into their cars and spend the rest of the evening necking, which is a lot more fun.

## WESTERNS

A most significant observation as regards the horse opera was made by Sol Siegel's five-year-old child. After his first few trips to the Hitching Post he deduced that the "baddies" wore black hats and the "goodies" wore white hats. Cliche from start to finish, about the only thing that could be done to freshen oaters would be to switch the hats around. Or perhaps have them reblocked—possibly with the actors' heads left in them.

## THE DETECTIVE STORY

I make only one plea here—that Sidney Greenstreet stop playing Brahms' "Lullaby" on the piano while he gives Peter Lorre instructions on how to rub out Humphrey Bogart. I also think it incumbent on writers to make clearer just how the poison dart did get lodged in Miss Hush's brain.

It's been awfully plotty out lately, and I've been hoping that someday in desperation Dick Powell would flag down a cab, toss away his cigarette, and, hopping into the back seat, order the driver to "Follow that story line!"

## ARMY AND NAVY STORIES

"Honest to God it's moider fellahs! Is there some law or somethin' that says we gotta have a guy from BROOKLYN in every Company of the U. S. Army, Navy and Marines who sighs for Moitle, rhapsodizes on the beauties of Prospect Park—ad nauseum?"

WELL, I see my time is about up and several of my friends are standing in the wings with baseball bats. But I don't want to get off and take my medicine without trying to make a few constructive suggestions—if I can think of any.

A clue to some Hollywood thinkers' thinking is manifest in a story making the rounds in studio scuttlebutt. The story: When Alfred Hitchcock admitted to a top executive that he didn't see many pictures, the executive, in all seriousness, said, "Then where do you get your ideas?"

This seems very apropos as regards the problem of turning out fresher films. As a class, Hollywood writers are the most imaginative and creative group, it would seem, in the history of the art of writing, in terms of output. Dickens 'lived' a lot of his novels, Lawrence of Arabia wrote from actual experience, the Maine novelist sneaks up on his theme after two years of research. The Hollywood writer must, on cue, create any atmosphere from Timbuctoo to Tibet, and fulfill any given story assignment whether it be laid in Hell's Kitchen or the London salon of Elsie Mendl—without having been to either place.

Which finally gets me to my point—Thank God, sighs the reader. It is that Hollywood writers don't do anything, go anyplace, or experience anything. One day the bucket is lowered into the well of inspiration and it comes up dry. "I'm stale," you say, *but what do*

twice a year if you can get seats), and your favorite eating place.

**H**APPILY or unhappily, we have all sold our birth-right for a mess of footage, and are plowing the golden furrow—but a furrow is a rut. Soon pictures will be more aptly titled, *The Romance of Romanoff's Bar*, *Murder at the Biltmore Garage*, *It Happened At Chasen's*, and *Who Stuffed the Ballot Box in the San Fernando League of Women Voters?*

And the annual two weeks in New York that only some of us take won't do the trick alone. Hollywood writers owe it to themselves and to their craft to get away more often for a change of thinking, and 'live a little.' Perhaps have a series of whirlwind love affairs, but shake off that Miracle Mile apathy. Allow the more stimulating air of distant climes to blow the lulling scent of orange blossoms from the old nostrils.

Don't tell me you can't afford it. Take courage and a leaf from Robert Benchley's credo on *HOW I CREATE*: "When I am writing a novel I must actually live the lives of my characters. If, for instance, my hero is a gambler on the French Riviera, I make myself pack up and go to Cannes or Nice, willy-nilly, and there throw myself into the gay life of the gambling set until I really feel that I *am* Paul De Lacroix, or Ed Whelan, or whatever my hero's name is. Of course this runs into money, and I am quite likely to have to change my ideas about my hero entirely and make him a bum on a tramp steamer working his way back to America, or a young college boy out of funds who lives by his wits until his friends at home send him a hundred and ten dollars."

Personally, I don't care. You can do what you like. As for myself, I am canceling my reservation at Palm Springs. Instead I plan to experience a new experience. I am going to retrace the two-thousand-mile trip that Captain Bligh took in an open boat, and there is room for four more passengers if anyone wants to join me when they finish their present assignment.

No takers? Okay. Then let's just give up, and tell Mr. Skouras to make the candy wrappers crackle louder to drown out the rest of our dialogue.

To create a few more enemies, I am reminded of an old Moran and Mack story that seems to fit the present film situation. The Two Black Crows are sitting on a bale of cotton in front of a backdrop of the Mississippi River. Moran turns slowly to Mack and says, "Does your dog like candy?" Mack thinks a very long time and then replies, "He eats garbage. He should love candy." Well, I, for one, think the American people should love candy.



It happened at Chasens.

*you do about it?* What do any of us do about it? Most of our life is spent writing on studio payroll 'or off and mostly in the Los Angeles radius. A life bounded by Santa Anita on one side, the Democratic and Republican parties on another, the Biltmore theater (about



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# Screenwriter Versus Film

DONALD BULL

*DONALD BULL is a member of the British Screenwriters' Association. During the war, he wrote and directed Public Relations Films for the Army and is now a staff writer with the Rank Organization.*

SOMETHING tells me that this won't be popular. The College of Cardinals on Cherokee Avenue may find a prima facie case of heresy. And for the views set out below, the prophet does not expect to collect any greater honor in his own country. It is a lone and somewhat frightened voice that addresses you. . . .

It speaks from the sidelines, from where its owner watches with mingled admiration and doubt the screenwriters' bandwagon get under way. The slogans have been coined, the manifestos issued. Shoulder to shoulder, the writers are on the march, and banners proclaim their simple aim: More Prestige and More Money. This solidarity among writers, the most individualistic of creatures, is not especially surprising. It would be hard to find anyone, not excluding the present writer, who didn't agree that these were very desirable aims indeed.

The arguments in favor are many and convincing, and we needn't go into them. What I find disturbing is a certain assumption that underlies the whole thesis, a fundamental assumption made by screenwriters about the nature of their work and its relation to the total activity involved in film-making, which is, I dare to assert, distinctly shaky.

It is this: that the screenwriter feels himself to be the true creator of the film, its only begetter. Now this is partly true, to the extent that it is almost entirely true in some cases, and not far from nonsense in others. My intention in this article is to demonstrate its general falsity, and show that, in fact, it is a dangerous attitude for the writer to take up, and one that works against the proper development of his art, which is the art of the film. But first let us see why he should feel that way at all.

One of the causes is fairly superficial, and arises out of his condition of virtual isolation, due to depart-

mental production methods. It is interesting, and to a British reader, slightly bewildering, to read this sort of statement in recent articles in *The Screen Writer*. 'You are strongly advised,' says a writer, 'to consult the Art Department when working on your script. This will save you the misery of seeing your hero, who should live in a cheap bed-sitting-room, disporting himself in the luxury of a pent-house apartment.' Another: 'It might be a good thing if the writer could watch the actual production of his script, standing in with the Director, Cameraman, Art Director, Editor, etc.,'—and goes on to suggest that writers who wish to perfect their technique might well sacrifice salary in order to do this without encroaching on Company's Time. Evidently actual effort and sometimes sacrifice are involved if the writer is to make himself aware of the whole process of film-making.

Few indeed bother to do so. The writer finds himself tucked away in an office in a writers' colony. Cut off from the other members of the creative team, he strikes natural links with the people he finds closest to him. This isolation of the writer makes him feel that he is a creature apart, belonging to an elite. He is aggrieved when his work is taken from his out-tray and then mauled about by a set of people he has never met and of whose functions he has probably but a hazy notion. He goes home after the premiere and broods. *He* did it all in his little room. And what does he get out of it? If he is lucky, a renewal of his option.

DEPARTMENTALISM seems to be inevitable in large-scale production, and a tendency towards it is observable in England also. In its application to screenwriting, it is a real cause of the distorted sense of values exhibited by many screenwriters about their particular function in the whole.

But there are other and more subtle causes, rooted



## THE SCREEN WRITER

in the peculiar nature of the job itself. The production of a film is a long process, whose end-product is the film, complete in cans and ready to be shown. One of the stages of the process is the making of the screenplay. It is a by-product, peculiar in that it happens to have achieved a finished form of its own; which can, in fact, be read, judged and to some extent enjoyed by any reader with a little easily acquired technical knowledge.

The writer tends to conclude that he is writing something that stands artistically on its own feet. He assumes that there, but for the change of form, is the film itself. He compares it to the musical mss., or the playscript, and looks on all the other people involved in the production, important as they may be, as equivalent to the conductor and orchestra in a musical performance, or the producer, designer and actors in the production of a play.

This view sees the screenplay as a work of art in itself. Since it is in the medium of words, it is a literary work of art. It is in this area of confusion that many false conclusions have their beginning.

The view has many and serious exponents. The French *Syndicat des Scenaristes* states baldly that the screenplay is a literary work. In the Nichols-Gassner collections of published screenplays the editors go so far as to say that the screenplay is now an established literary form, to be judged according to the standards applied to the novel or the printed playscript.

A point in aesthetic philosophy is raised. Certainly, a piece of music may be said to have complete existence even though it is unperformed. It is less certain whether a stage-play exists until it is produced on the stage and subjected to the interplay of actors and audience, and to the dimension of time. In the present writer's view, it is heresy to assert that a film exists at all before it is in the physical form of a celluloid strip in the act of being projected on to a screen.

A reading of the screenplays printed in the Nichols-Gassner collections can only confirm this view. They give the reader say ten per cent of the emotional kick that he would get from seeing the film. How could it be otherwise? Would you enjoy a painting from a description of it? In fact, they are the shadows of shadows, though presented with great skill. They are obligatory reading for anyone interested in the art and craft of film, but it is preposterous to suggest that they can be read and enjoyed as works of art in their own right.

But if the screenplay has no artistic values *per se*, what has it got? Ideally, it *indicates* values which must be realised by later steps in the process.

Now if we leave out of account for the moment the question of dialogue, these values are non-literary.

They have nothing to do with authorship as practised by a novelist or playwright. They are values peculiar to the film. Ideally a screenplay might well be realised—I won't say written—by a screenwriter who is otherwise illiterate. His script is intended for no audience other than the team making the film, who may well enjoy agreeable writing and a graceful style. The director, for example, may appreciate the screenwriter's vivid description of the hero's jostling his way in agony of mind along a crowded pavement, and it may lead him to consult with his cameraman and shoot the action with a 90 mm. lens to heighten the sense of his being crowded in. The same result would be achieved by the writer stipulating a 90 mm. lens, assuming he knew what that was. (I take the example from a scene in David Lean's *Great Expectations*.) It would not be so readable and John Gassner would surely alter it in his edition of the script for his book—but the effect in the film would be the same.

THE screenwriter, then, who knows what cinematic values are and how to secure them, must possess equipment which raises him far above the status of mere writer. He must know what can be done with actors, camera, the design of sets, the sound-track, cutting. The writer who knows all that much is a rare bird indeed, and significantly he generally stops being a writer and realises his true capacity as director or producer.

So we seem to reach the conclusion that screenwriters who thoroughly know their job will normally graduate to the higher level of director or producership; while those who don't know their job deserve to remain at their present depressed status. . . .

Well, of course, there's a hole in the argument, thank heaven, specifically left there by the omission of the question of dialogue. The fallacy lies in the dogmatic assertion that the values of the film are one hundred per cent non-literary. Ideally perhaps this should be so, but the argument takes us into those arid fields of discussion already explored by the earnest souls who ask: "Is Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony Pure Music?" and "Should Ballet Tell a Story?"

A good film may contain values of many orders other than the 'pure' visual and aural. Among them is the category of literary orders, depending largely on the degree to which dialogue is used as a story-telling device. The present predominant importance of the writer in film production owes itself almost exclusively to the adoption of the dialogue-film as the standard mode. The question is: will it remain so?

I think we must face the fact that the coming of sound made the art of the film branch in a direction

different from that presaged by the silent film. The trend then was towards a purely visual form, with its laws of construction and dramaturgy derived entirely from an appeal to the eye. The silent-film director would rightly boast of the small number of sub-titles he was forced to use in telling his story. He justly recognised that sub-titles were a weakness, a contradiction of the nature of his craft—just as if a novelist were forced to use illustrations fully to convey his meaning.

Nevertheless, the silent-film form was restricted. Subtlety of characterization and complexity of plot were denied to it. Its great successes were in films like the Soviet revolutionary epics, the Flaherty idylls, the American knockabout comedies, where the plot situation was of the simplest and the characters merely types. Significantly, the best of these films were written by the men who directed them. The screenwriter as we know him today hardly existed.

THE coming of sound opened up enormous and exciting possibilities to the film-maker. Some, like Hitchcock and Clair, embraced their opportunities with enthusiasm, and it looked for a time as if we were to get a new art form, arising out of a genuine fusion of picture and sound. These were the great days of the sound-film: *Le Million*, *Murder*, *City Streets*, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, the films of Ruttman, the early Disneys. Also, the Talkie.

We have never recovered from the Talkie. The talkies could talk the hind-leg off a donkey. They talked the true sound-film out of existence. They talked into being the new hybrid, the literary-pictorial film. This incorporated values derived from the theatre and the novel. Inevitably, it incorporated the playwrights and the novelists too. These writers, honest men all, saw in the film a primarily literary form. And in their hands that is what it has largely become.

To anyone who doubts the truth of this, the following experiment is recommended. Go to see an average good movie and, during some part of its length (you won't be able to stand the ordeal for long) shut your ears firmly and *look*. You will find that the film has ceased largely to be pictorial. The picture is a vehicle for the sound-track, and the sound-track is a vehicle for words. Now open your ears and try shutting your eyes. . . .

Every screenwriter knows the fatal fascination of the dialogue scene. Given a section of story to translate into screen terms, the writer's first impulse is to seek a suitable encounter or series of encounters between characters, whose speeches can tell the story. For the writer trained to think in terms of words, it is a matter

of great difficulty to tear himself free from this habit and think pictorially.

In the last ten years or so, the literary-pictorial film, the so-called dialogue-film, has become the standard mode of expression in all film-making centres. The hybrid, like so many mongrels, has ousted the pure strain, and has almost achieved a 'pure' form of its own. It has begun to count many great artistic successes to its credit. They are almost too numerous to mention, but, to take two supreme examples, the world would be poorer if a rigid purism denied Rosselli the right to create his *Rome*, *Open City*, or Charlie Chaplin his *Monsieur Verdoux*.

It is such films as these that back the screenwriter's claim to a place in the sun. They would be impossible without his special talents. Nevertheless, it is about time we asked ourselves: "is the dialogue-film to remain the standard mode, or is it to develop into a 'purer' form. If so, what changes, if any, will this entail in the function of the screenwriter?"

To one who was educated in the silent-film, and has experienced the excitement and promise envisaged by the advent of sound, it is axiomatic that the dialogue-film cannot by its very nature realise the full potentialities of the medium. Though it can explore subtleties of psychology and complexities of plot that the use of dialogue makes possible, I think that one day we shall have to return to the pure fount of visual creation—but we shall have to re-learn our craft almost from the beginning.

The first rumblings can be heard—a dissatisfaction among the best of our film-makers with the established forms, tied down to the traditional methods of story-telling unchanged since the *Odyssey*.

NO one knows what the new form will be. Perhaps the screen has passed through a great prose period and is ready to achieve its own poetry. Perhaps we shall break free from the bonds of realism and explore the true dream-world of the film, whose language is a direct appeal to the senses, and whose logic is that of the emotions.

Whatever changes occur, they will be changes in form only. There will always be a Story. They tell me that even *Finnegans Wake* has a story. And the making of stories is the writer's job, which others without his training and gifts usurp at their peril. But somewhere in the future the false isolation of the screenwriter must be broken down. He must free himself from the literary approach, and the misconceptions to which this gives rise. Then, and not till then, we may see something new emerge. It should be good.

And now—the faggots, and the stake!



## Gunn Shots

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)

the sequels will of course be *Wife Act* and *Mother Act*.

ACTORS GET cuter every day. A script dealing with the soul struggles of a man who had wanted to become a priest was approved by both the Johnston Office and the Catholic Church. With some misgivings, the producer offered the role to an actor whose entire career had consisted of playing three gangsters and a traffic cop you wouldn't want around the children either. This spiritual type turned the script down cold, saying loftily: "No Man of God would behave like this."

IN THE tribute to Rouben Mamoulian in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Mr. Mamoulian cites, as example of his red-hot originality, the treatment of a scene so strikingly new and different that he had trouble forcing it on the reluctant producer, Arthur Freed. In his description of the scene: as the hero gets drunk, the room (through his eyes) becomes progressively more elegant, the lighting softer and more glamorous, and

a frowzy girl well-dressed and beautiful. Mr. Mamoulian does not mention that before shooting the picture he was briefly scheduled to direct Anita Loos' *Happy Birthday*, in which as the heroine gets drunk, the room becomes progressively more elegant, etc.

VINCENT SHERMAN, a director who is a bit inclined to rewrite on the set, is now working on *Don Juan*, from a script by George Oppenheimer. The picture is referred to on the lot as "Sherman's March Through George."

STORY EDITORS are getting more ingenious at thinking up ways to avoid buying new material. A studio which had just finished a best-seller now has writers working on one of the book's sub-plots. Agents can now plug a novel on the grounds that it will make three or four great pictures.

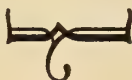
WARNERS' SCRIPT *Up Until Now*, first planned as anti-Fascist, then as anti-Communist, then announced as both anti-Fascist and anti-Communist, and finally shelved without explanation, is now being rewritten by the Saul Elkins budget unit, but nobody cared to come right out

and mention it on the list of Warners' pictures for next year.

ACCORDING TO the *Variety* list of Top Grossers of '47, *Desire Me*, the classic turkey of the year, will outgross *Miracle on 34th St.*, *Boomerang*, and *Crossfire*; while *It's A Wonderful Life*, supposed to be unsatisfactory at the box-office, is ahead of *Body and Soul*, the smash hit. Who's kidding whom?

NOW THAT studios are selling their backlogs of unproduced scripts, a writer can be his own competition. One man, writing a vehicle for one of the Grand Old Girls, found his project was about to be shelved in favor of a script he had written for the same G.O.G. all of six years ago at another studio. He persuaded his bosses that the earlier script wasn't worth the mimeographing cost, kept his job, and must be quite a diplomat.

ESTIMATED Statistics on *WOTOT* (*Writers on Their Own Time*): 247 are writing novels (all reported accepted for early publication); 176 are writing plays (mostly intended to star Helen Hayes, with the Lunts and Tallulah tying for second place); and 381 are writing original screenplays or stories (Joan Crawford is reported interested in all of them).



## Report of Credit Union Committee

The last general meeting to report on the Credit Union Committee was unanimously approved by the general membership.

Immediately afterwards the committee met with Mr. Mitchell, the Federal Credit Union examiner, and Mr. Morris of the council for the Guild.

Application was made to the government for the charter of the Screen Writers' Federal Credit Union, and Mr. Mitchell gave the opinion that organization might be completed within thirty days.

Our Credit Union is probably the most important item on the Guild's present program of economic service to the membership.

Detailed factual report on the opinions of the Credit Union and its value as a means whereby the working writer can help the other fellow through the present crisis of unemployment and the conservative safeguards it provides for the protection of the borrower and the lender is now being prepared for *The Screen Writer Magazine*.

..... JACK NATTEFORD

# Diary of a Dupe Addict

DAVID CHANDLER

SWG member DAVID CHANDLER is a member of the Editorial Committee, and a previous contributor to The Screen Writer.

**S**eptember 21. Strange, these headaches I've been having. Dr. Zillpuss says he finds nothing wrong, probably just worry and overwork. Says I ought to relax more. Cannot be sure I like Dr. Zillpuss, especially the way he says I'm "very normal," just as if it were an insult. "A fellow like you, college-bred, middle-class, who's worked in a bank all his life, has made something of a success of himself, has his beliefs confirmed every time he opens the papers, you've got to learn to relax." He says I ought to go to the movies. I haven't for years. But I will now. Doctor's orders. However, from what I read in the papers I'd better be careful about the subtle propaganda they're trying to put over on us.

September 23. Went to first movie. Had three bags of the most delicious popcorn, warm and buttery. Slept like a babe through the pictures, but couldn't get to sleep at home. Dr. Z. says this normal until adjustment is made. "Keep on going," he says. I'm beginning to wonder about Doctor Z.: he wears glasses, reads a lot of books, his outer office doesn't have the *National Geographic* or *Life*, but it does have back copies of the *Nation*. Maybe I'm just being oversensitive in my present condition—after all, he *couldn't* be.

September 26. Saw very interesting picture which takes place at Mexican border. Liked it fine, except that I forgot to get popcorn. Bought some on way out to eat at home, but it didn't taste the same there. The hero of the picture at one point is confronted by the villain who wants him to do something dastardly and promises him all kinds of money. The hero refuses. "Money isn't everything," he says, declaring he's doing what he's doing to avenge a pal. "Money isn't everything." I never thought of it that way before.

September 27. Zillpuss very pleased at my progress. Brought myself to ask him about why no *Geographics*. "I got tired of all those pictures of airplanes over bullock carts with the caption 'Old and New Meet in Changing Asia'," he said. Is this significant? Went to movie before dinner tonight. A snow picture written by

four writers in which the heroine's father, a poor farmer, who comes to the luxurious hotel to look for his daughter is told to try the service entrance while all the time she's in the grand ballroom. It seemed like a deliberate attempt to make the hardworking farmer, who, after all, is the backbone of our agricultural system, ridiculous. Still, he was a fool coming into the lobby in his muddy boots.

September 30. An exhilarating weekend. Went to the movies Friday night and came out with a capital idea. From now on I'm going to bring my own melted butter. Tried it Saturday at a matinee and it worked out so fine, I went to an evening show too. Slept fine. Headaches not so troublesome, but light in street seems to be bothering eyes. Okay, however, in the dark. Zillpuss certainly knows his stuff. Must give him credit. Spent whole day in Bijou. In picture a returned veteran gets turned down for seat in airplane in favor of businessman. I thought it was unfortunate, considering how the vet was on his way home and all.

October 3. Went to dentist. "You sure like popcorn," he said on examining the crevices between my teeth. I told him about bringing own butter, but he said it wouldn't be practical for him. Outer office has magazine called *American Hygienist*. Does this mean he believes that America isn't as hygienic as it might be or that he believes it simply isn't hygienic at all and wants to do something about it? I wish there were a central agency which could steer us right on all these isms. It might be a front organization at that.

October 4. Went back to the Bijou because I couldn't get that scene in the airline office out of my mind. Unquestionably that businessman was being inconsiderate. Never knew such things were possible. Other scene I'd not realized significance of before: Vet tries to get loan but lacks collateral and gets turned down at bank. Bank acted properly, I believe. Still, whole thing troubled me strangely. Headaches coming back.

October 6. Fine time last night. Three bags of popcorn with just the right amount of salt and butter. Saw



old picture about country boy who comes to New York after he inherits fortune but really loves to play tuba. Liked it fine, but it made me think maybe inheriting a fortune isn't all I thought it cracked up to be. On way home found an old magazine in bus. Article by man named Crummet or Tiffin or something like that about that picture I saw at the Bijou. He says businessmen gave up their airline reservations to veterans and banks loaned money to vets and the whole thing is an attempt to discredit businessmen and bankers. He's certainly right, but so is the picture. These damnable headaches.

*October 11.* Dr. Z. says see comedies, not to worry about significance of pictures too much. Just relax. Relax! How can you? Been going to comedies. Butlers always pompous and English. Made me doubtful about our relations with Britain. Rich girl always runs away from home. Made me think how little happiness you get from wealth. Father hardly ever goes down to place of business. Made me think how unfair that he should have all that luxury and do no work. Headaches simply excruciating.

*October 13.* Getting very suspicious about Dr. Zillpuss. May write my congressman for name of good neurologist who keeps *Geographic* and *Life*. Is Z. trying to make a tool of me?

*October 14.* Broke appointment with Z. Saw light comedy in which hero, son of wealthy parents, marries showgirl and goes out West where, as he says, "We won't ever have any money or position to fight about." I chuckled. But good heavens, I was staggered at the realization later of what I'd done.

*October 15.* Z. very cool. I told him I was considering giving him subscriptions to *National Geographic* and *Life* for Christmas. "My word," he said, "you want to wreck my practice?" Now that he has said that, it does seem to me that the patients I have seen in his outer office wear glasses and read those copies of the *Nation*. Also—he has lately taken to getting the *New Republic* edited by That Man. Saw copies of the *New Yorker* and thought maybe that would be light, but it turned out that they were subtly trying to say that trouble with the world is that everybody is trying to hold fast to old beliefs. Sounded persuasive until I realized that I always believed trouble with the world is that we're always right and they're always wrong and won't do what we know they should do. Still, I shouldn't be surprised. We know what New York is a hotbed of. Went back to Bijou. Caught something else in that picture. One soldier's father is pathetic, drunken and slovenly. Made me think maybe family isn't all it's cracked up to be.

*October 16-27.* Have been very lazy with this. Go-

ing to movies all the time. Papers full of stuff about Washington. Dr. Z. laughs at it and urges me to keep on with relaxing in movie houses. Says I should find an essay by Thomas Mann (pronounced MaHHHHn—obviously a foreigner, I didn't lose the significance, no matter what Z. thinks of me) about going to movies where the semi-dark is itself restful. That's true enough, but I'm beginning to think it's all a racket. That actor in Washington certainly made sense. I always thought he was a pretty boy with no brains, but he sure is alert. Still, I can't help feeling that most of the people I've seen in the movies act more or less reasonably. Then I read the papers and learn they've only been sugarcoating the pill to get their subversive messages across. These headaches!

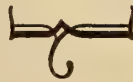
*October 29.* Went to Hitching Post in search of movies with absolutely no significance. Good gravy, these western things are rotten to the core with subversive isms. Man trying to steal ranch away from heroine's father works for eastern bankers. Hero finds rustler despite clumsy attempts of sheriff to handle matter himself, making a fool of law and police officers. Girl kisses masked hero, disgracing virtue of pioneer woman. How I wish they'd subpoena me! I've become an authority. Still it was a good picture. I wonder if it would be possible to change neurologists and ask new one to fill out kind of loyalty test, to make sure I wasn't being made a tool of anything. Headaches are so troublesome even popcorn seems tiresome. Or could it be *people* are destroying flavor of popcorn to make us more amenable to exported stuff?

*November 5.* Dr. Z. very coolly told me he had suggested movies as a relaxation. Told me I was not going to them in the proper frame of mind. "Let the words, music and lights wash over you lightly; remember that here is one art-form in which everything ends, nothing is incomplete, everything has an answer because sooner or later the projectionist runs out of spools and calls it a night." I got pretty angry at this, told him it was my duty not to be used as an unwitting tool. He said something about paranoia, but big words don't frighten me any more. "And what about those magazines out there, doctor?" I shouted at him. "What kind of fool do you take me for?" He wanted to know if I have any relatives in town. "What's that got to do with it?" I exclaimed. "I just want to know." He gave me a sedative and I felt better. But all night long I dreamed I was being pumped for secrets. What do I know that's secret?

*November 10.* Well, this has really made me furious. Went to see a picture supposed to be an innocent costume affair. but that business in Washington has made me fully aware of the devious methods of the picture's

writers. Here was a girl, a nobody, really just a slut, and she gets kings and everybody crazy about her. Trying to get us to believe that people of quality have no judgment, of course. Rushed to see Dr. Z. and broke into his office shouting, "Now I understand what you're trying to do to me. You've been spoonfeeding me propaganda." I'm afraid I threw a lamp at him. "I'm not going to be an innocent dupe any longer. And what about those magazines? And what have you done to my popcorn?" Someone came up from behind me, pinned my arms. Dr. Z. said, "Luckily for you, I've

got your brother's signature on this." He waved a piece of paper before my face. "In no time at all we should have you adjusted." He must have given me a sedative. When I woke up I found myself at this very pleasant place in the country. It looks like a big hotel. I asked for popcorn with plenty of butter and a fine big man brought me a big bag. He says I can have all the popcorn I want so long as I'm a good boy. I'm going to like it here, I can see that. They say I won't have to go to the movies ever, ever, ever. This is my idea of a way of life.



*THE SCREEN WRITER* is often confronted with the problem of filler—how to occupy just such a space as this. We don't like to waste it but at the same time we are not interested in the conventional filler, stating that there are 406 dogs and only 89 fire plugs in Galva, Illinois, nor are we excited over the annual rainfall in Guatemala. What we need are suggestions, ideas and anecdotes of interest and information to the general membership. If you have something to say and can say it in 300 words, let us have a crack at it. All contributions must be signed.



# The Current Literary Market

BARTHOLD FLES

| *BARTHOLD FLES, a New York literary agent, is well known to film writers.*

IT is a melancholy fact that a great many screen writers have lost their ability to produce material for publication, if indeed they were ever interested in writing for the book and magazine market. Indubitably it takes a good deal of hard work, the seat-of-the-pants-to-the-seat-of-the-chair type of application, to create something that is up to present-day Eastern standards. Furthermore, the Western writer often feels he would be free-lancing into a void, for he can have little conception of the market's requirements today. And yet it is well worth his while to consider this aspect of his profession.

Many a screen writer, when his contract is settled or when unable to find employment in the studios, turns to the production of screen originals. Hence, there is today an over-supply of original screen stories, with comparatively little demand.

Writing for the screen demands a special technique, based on an auditory and visual, rather than a reading reaction, with the accent on plot and dialogue, while originals are written with a view to impressing producers, directors and stars. Hence, the screen writer has acquired a facility to create in the three-act play form, translatable in screen terminology; or, in the case of originals, a knack for diverting the eventual purchaser with a slick style, novel gimmicks, twists and such-like trickery—all of which may make for entertainment, pace, and sales, and often does, but is hardly conducive to literary quality. The demands of Hollywood are by no means those of the East Coast.

On the whole, writing for the screen is a collaborative effort; even though treatment or screen play may be the product of one brain, by the time and often while the story is transferred to the screen, director, producer and even actors have altered it, sometimes beyond recognition. Then, too, few screen plays are read by anyone outside the industry, and still fewer published. Yet almost every screen writer must have an occasional twinge of conscience—the uneasy feeling that every writer has his inevitable alter ego, his nat-

ural collaborator, that is, his reader. In other words, the writer wants to publish *what he writes*, with no alien and probably unsympathetic interference.

NO one wants to write for his desk; publishing is an integral part of creative writing. Hence, the screen writer is hesitant about composing a manuscript, which means months of intensive work—and with little expectation of publication. He bitterly remembers former conditions: the popularity of the ubiquitous boy-meets-girl formula, the many taboos, the catering to names—in the slicks; and in the book field, the necessity of finishing a fiction manuscript before offering it. Too, he will find on the Strip scarcely any sympathetic agents, able to give him constructive advice or to market his material, except through their correspondents—Eastern literary agents who are generally a mere letter-head to him. True, increasingly, a roaming editor or publisher finds his way to Hollywood, but that is merely a matter of chance; and these unfortunate scouts usually spend a scant week or so on the Coast—barely time to meet a favored few of their intended victims over a cocktail.

It may be instructive, then, to quote from a circular letter sent out recently by the editors of the Curtis publications—*Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Country Gentleman*—to literary agents:

We have been observing of late that too often a new short-story writer has appeared, shown great promise, and then gone into some other writing field. In some cases, experienced writers have turned from the short story to books, movies, etc. We believe that this is due, at least in part, to the fact that the short-story rates have not kept pace, especially in the lower brackets, with the rise in general price levels. In order to attract new writers to the short-story field and to make its financial awards sufficient to hold them, we are announcing a new policy by which we hope, with your cooperation, to accomplish these results.

THE editors then quote the new prices—\$750 for a “first” story, as heretofore; but \$1,000 for the next one, \$1,250 for the third, and beginning with the sixth, “if steady production has been maintained,” the minimum will be \$1,500. They add:

Subsequent increases will be a matter of negotiation in each individual case, but the same policy of rewarding consistency in production and improvement in quality will be followed.

In each case the prices quoted are minimums. If a story impresses us as worth more than the scheduled figure, we shall pay more for it, and if supply-and-demand has raised an author's rate before his next increase from us is due, we shall naturally meet the newly established price.

Other magazines in the slick field of course have followed suit. *Good Housekeeping* has had a minimum of \$800 for a “first”; *Cosmopolitan* recently raised the ante to \$850; *Woman's Home Companion* promptly proclaimed that it would not allow itself to be outbid by any other magazine.

These bids for authors are not merely straws in the wind. In the magazine field, at least, this is still a sellers' market.

Nor is this all. In the past several years, slick magazines have increasingly bought fiction that until recently would have found a place only in the quality market. Why sell a story for \$25 to *Story* magazine if one can get \$750 for the same yarn from a slick—and have a far larger audience (millions instead of thousands)? That is, unless one craves the prestige of a high-brow journal.

As for taboos, most of them have been discarded; today, editors are guided mainly by the precepts of good taste. Social and racial questions are no longer *infra dig*—as witness the publication in *Cosmopolitan* of *Gentleman's Agreement*, and the appearance of the Negro as main protagonist, rather than a servant or a quaint character, in many slick periodicals.

Though the “happy ending” is still with us, it is no longer *de rigueur* either; the somber or imaginative narrative stands an equally good chance in our new slicks, if well handled.

In the book field, publishers know full well that the new writer is the red blood of the trade; and though the president of Little, Brown in a recent pessimistic *Atlantic Monthly* article expressed the consensus of the book trade, still he realized—and emphasizes—that without writers there would be no books. His own company published eight first novels this year out of a fiction list of 24 titles, which is indicative of publishers' general policy. And this in the face of much increased manufacturing costs, as quoted by Mr. McIntyre of

Little, Brown, and by Bennett Cerf, of Random House, in the *Saturday Review of Literature*.

AFTER a recent scouting trip to California, I made an informal survey of the book field. Referring to my notes after three dozen Algonquin, Ritz, Oak Room, Caviar and Champs Elysees lunches—thoughtfully provided by the various editors—I find such desiderata as: “good literary first novels, quality biographies (there's a dearth of them), historical fiction, humor, Americana; names almost immaterial.” And yet it is an axiom that publishers almost inevitably lose money on first novels. The various contests and fellowships also show the desire on the part of the publishers to find and develop new talent and enable better-known names, too, to produce literary wares. But writing a book, as every author knows, is a luxury; its publication is useful as an anchor, and facilitates the placing of short stories.

Most screen writers know that publication in book or magazine form enhances a property's value, for several reasons: the publicity involved, the fact that thousands, and in the case of magazine material, millions, become familiar with title, story and author's name. The prestige itself is valuable; many stars prefer to appear in pictures based on published material, which makes the property more saleable, particularly to independents who largely depend for their acting talent on loan-outs. Then, too, this increased prestige influences the writers' value as an employee, helps him in getting jobs, etc. This beneficial effect starts the moment the property is placed—and thus before actual publication. Some members of the profession have been smart enough to await sale or even publication before allowing their picture agents to put property on the market, often with spectacular results. Everyone knows the value in Hollywood of a book club selection.

Now, as for some pertinent—or impertinent—suggestions: (1) Read the magazines for which you want to write; (2) (if you are out of practice) start with some finger exercises—write a few short stories, or sketches, or almost anything at all, as a preparation; (3) select a multiple market—in other words, slant your stuff toward a type of magazine of which there are several, rather than one example; too many starting or re-starting authors do the kind of sketch that is publishable exclusively in the *New Yorker* or *Esquire* (better yet: don't think about slanting; write what you want to write!); (4) don't write down to your audience.

Concretely, magazines like the following lengths: the short short (1,500-1,800); the novelette (12,000-25,000); the one-shot (25,000-40,000); the two-



part (approximately 30,000); the serial (40,000 words and up, with due regard to sub-climax at the end of each instalment and a wallop at the finish). The serial can often be sold as a book, or, conversely, the book as a serial, thus making it a double threat. And \$25,000 for a serial is not exceptional.

**B**OOK publishers will buy material on the basis of completed manuscript, or an outline plus samples of text. That outline may be in the form of a synopsis, a chapter-by-chapter precis, or even a letter; the samples, preferably aggregating about 100 pages, or 30,000 words, may be any chapters, not necessarily the first, but in near-final form, so as to give the publisher a reasonable idea of what the finished product will be like. Because of high manufacturing expenses, the short book (with a minimum of about 40,000 words) is again popular.

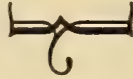
As for advances, there are two schools of thought; the first demands all the traffic will bear, on the basis of getting while the getting is good; while the other

subscribes to the theory of giving the publisher a chance to recoup his advance while spending more money on publicity and advertising. It may be best to strike an average between these two extremes.

As for the problem of selecting a literary agent: as mentioned before, most Hollywood agents have their New York correspondents; and any editor or publisher, or the Authors' Guild, will be glad to recommend a number of prospects; or you can ask a colleague for the name of his Eastern agent.

The screenwriter, though frequently handicapped by ignorance of Eastern conditions, by fear, disinclination, lack of encouragement, lack of practice—or by just plain laziness—is in reality ideally equipped to break into publication under present-day conditions. Once he is freed from the limitations too often forced upon him by the Breen office or, indirectly, by narrow-minded pressure groups, he can bring to American letters a fresh perspective.

And there is little likelihood that the red scare will catch up with the book and magazine world.



Le Cannet, December 21st, 1947

The Screen Writers' Guild, Inc.  
Hollywood, California.

Dear Sirs:

A visit which I paid to U.S.A. a few years before the war inspired me with the theme for a screen play. I have written a summary of the play, but I am not sufficiently gifted to write the dialogues.

I should, therefore, like to ask you if it would be possible for you to put me in touch with one of your members who would care to take on and develop the script.

The subject is patho-comic, Charlie Chaplin style.

Thanking you,

I remain, dear Sirs,

Yours truly,

R. ANSAY  
28, rue Centrale  
Le Cannet, A.M. France

# Two Heads Are Worse Than One

## (Especially if They're on You)

DON HARTMAN

*SWG member DON HARTMAN is a previous contributor to The Screen Writer. Among his screen writing credits are The Kid From Brooklyn, Down To Earth and It Had To Be You.*

**F**OR fifteen years I got along fine as a writer, except that every time I looked at the stuff on the screen some evil voice inside of me whispered "You could do it better yourself, dream boy." Once William Wyler directed a picture I wrote with Steve Avery and nothing whispered so I sent him a five page love letter. I slept wonderfully that night. A few months later another picture was released and the "voice" started picking on me again. It's been like that for years. So, rather than toss and tumble all night forever I recently asked Harry Cohn to let me direct Ginger Rogers and Cornel Wilde in *It Had To Be You*. I waited with pounding heart, hoping he would refuse me. But he smiled and said very simply, "Good idea. Go ahead." I went back to my office and toyed all afternoon with the prospect of tossing myself out the window. Then I got a brilliant flash. Ginger Rogers would never accept me! I would tell her at once, she would protest, and I would be *free*.

I drove through traffic like a man possessed. I was so out of breath when I broke the news to her that she mistook my excitement for enthusiasm and I was lost. She said Billy Wilder directed her for his "first" and she was simply delighted with the result. I pleaded with her to be cautious—I wasn't Billy Wilder. She said my modesty was charming. I said I didn't know anything about the camera. She said McCarey, Capra and Stevens never worried about the camera, they worried about the actors. The more I tore myself down the surer she was of my 'genius.' I gave up in despair.

I had one more out. Cornel Wilde. I rushed to his house and fairly broke down the door. What did he think of me directing him in his first big comedy role—a role that could advance his career considerably or *ruin* him? He thought the idea was splendid. Couldn't be happier. I named a dozen other experienced directors

I could get and asked him to consider the matter very carefully. He was adamant. He still thought I would be perfect. I countered that I hadn't been feeling too well lately and that directing was quite a nervous strain. He maintained it was just the stimulus I needed. Before I could show him my coated tongue he called the newspapers and announced that I was going to direct his next picture. I desperately needed the drink he gave me.

**T**HE Great Day grew nearer and nearer, and I got more and more frightened. People around the studio started treating me like a director and I had to act as if I knew what I was talking about. Finally, one week before shooting time I decided to do something drastic. I hadn't really slept for two weeks. I went to Harry Cohn and confessed that it was all a mistake, that I didn't even know what to do with the camera. He told me to stop worrying; he had complete confidence in me and would give me two million dollars to spend on the picture. I wondered just how badly carbon monoxide discolors the human body, and how soon my wife would re-marry.

Then I hit upon a solution. Rudy Mate one of the ablest cameramen in Hollywood, could direct the camera and I would direct the actors. When I broke the news to Rudy he was very pleased. I lost all my fears and was the happiest man in town—for about a week.

**T**HE Great Day came. I set two alarm clocks and had an assistant telephone to be sure and wake me up. I had a horror of being late the *first* day and I'm a fellow who loves to sleep. I wondered what to wear. Mustn't look too Hollywood. I changed clothes a



dozen times, trying to appear casual. I ate a light breakfast, took a phenobarbital, and headed for the studio. I noticed people on the street more that morning than ever before in my life. I felt sorry, in a way, for all of them. Where were **THEY** going? I was going to direct my first picture! Immediately I was terrified all over again. What if I just kept on driving until I came to some small town and lost myself. I could smuggle word back to my wife, and she could sell the house and cash in the war bonds. Might not cost much to live in a little desert hideaway. We could probably go on for years. Would my disappearance be in the newspapers? What would they say? Surely they would print **SOMETHING** about it! At least the *trade* papers! But there I was at Gower and Sunset. So I strolled as nonchalantly as possible onto Stage Nine. I had *three* wedding scenes to shoot that day with all the principals and two hundred extras. All eyes were on me for instructions. I felt like a Boy Scout who had suddenly been transformed into General Eisenhower. Here was the moment for the first command. One word, one gesture, and all hell would break loose!

For some reason that I shall never understand, I

suddenly found myself making a speech to the entire company—something about the general tone of the picture and the hope that we would all be very happy together, and how much I would really appreciate the cooperation and help of the cast and crew. I really poured my soul into that last part. Five minutes later we were rehearsing and two hours after that I was calling "Action!" and "Cut!" and "Print it!" without my voice cracking.

I know this would be a better yarn if I could tell you that they carried me out in a state of hysteria, and that I was only able to continue by having an analyst on the set every day thereafter. But, alas, one hour in the battle makes one a veteran. Added to this is a little touch that could only happen in Hollywood. The actors are so used to living in a world of make-believe that it is easy for them to pretend. And I shall be forever grateful that they all joined forces as if by some secret code, and pretended that I was an old timer who really knew his onions.

I can't wait to get started on another picture, and I hope next time they won't have to make believe. Me either.



## Professional Group Accident and Sickness Insurance

After two years of careful study, a tailor-made plan for a group insurance covering accident, hospitalization and sick benefits for members of the Screen Writers' Guild has been completed. This policy, drawn for a group, will cost a little more than half of what it would for individuals.

Sheridan Gibney has signed the official papers and letters, and applications have been sent to all active members.

Members of the Screen Writers' Guild are urged to read carefully the details regarding this excellent insurance policy which will be covered by The National Casualty Co. of Detroit. No medical examination is necessary. All members responding within the specified time will be accepted regardless of previous health histories.

However, this plan CANNOT GO INTO EFFECT unless a minimum of fifty percent of the membership signs applications. Therefore, if you have received the detailed explanation of the Professional Group Accident and Sickness Insurance as drawn up by George P. Quigley, insurance broker, please read it carefully and without delay. If you are one of the great majority of members who advocate group insurance for screen writers, sign your application AT ONCE and return it to the Screen Writers' Guild so that all insurance policies can be put into immediate effect.

Remember, accidents, appendectomies and ailments have an insolent disregard for assignments, lack of assignments, outstanding bills or a depleted bank account.

— ERNA LAZARUS



## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen (January 26, 1948)

Columbia—Louella MacFarlane; alternate, Edward Huebsch.

MGM—Anne Chapin; alternate, Sonya Levien; Joseph Ansen, Robert Nathan, and George Wells, Studio Committee.

Paramount — Theodore Strauss; alternate, Richard Breen.

Republic—Sloan Nibley; alternate, Patrick Ford.

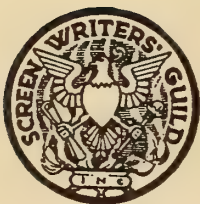
RKO—Daniel Mainwaring; alternate, Martin Rackin.

20th Century-Fox — Richard Murphy; alternate, Wanda Tuchock.

Universal-International—D. D. Beauchamp.

Warners—James Webb; alternate, Edmund North.





## SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD, INC.

1655 NO. CHEROKEE AVE., HOLLYWOOD 28, CALIFORNIA  
AFFILIATED WITH AUTHORS' LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD, THE SCREEN WRITERS' GUILD: PRESIDENT: SHERIDAN GIBNEY; 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT, GEORGE SEATON; 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT, F. HUGH HERBERT; 3RD VICE-PRESIDENT, DWIGHT TAYLOR; SECRETARY, ARTHUR SHEEKMAN; TREASURER, HARRY TUGEND. EXECUTIVE BOARD: ROBERT ARDREY, ART ARTHUR, STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY, CLAUDE BINYON, CHARLES BRACKETT, FRANK CAVETT, OLIVE COOPER, VALENTINE DAVIES, RICHARD ENGLISH, EVERETT FREEMAN, PAUL GANGELIN, ALBERT HACKETT, MILTON KRIMS, ERNEST PASCAL, LEONARD SPIGELGASS. COUNSEL, MORRIS E. COHN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, ALICE PENNEMAN.

# E D I T O R I A L

### THE CASE OF THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

IN these days in which the Screen Writers' Guild and the whole motion picture industry is beset by major problems, it is perhaps heartening to note that the dry rot fringe is still with us. It is the one sign of normalcy in an era of unemployment, a rapidly declining foreign market, proposed censorship, and a concerted attack on the entire motion picture industry by politicians with a nice eye for the headlines. The Screen Writers' Guild, now nearing its fifteenth year in the industry, can find only one familiar sign in the heavens: the *Hollywood Reporter* and Mr. William Wilkerson, its owner and editor, are still viewing us with alarm.

This is, perhaps, as it should be. Both the Screen Writers' Guild and Mr. Wilkerson are, in a sense, special pleaders. The Guild, whose sole and vital concern is the professional interests of its members, represents labor, something that Mr. Wilkerson, as a representative voice of reaction, must categorically oppose. Through the editorial column of his trade paper he has consistently attacked this Guild, its membership and board. We have served as a nice whipping boy for one who makes up in fury what he lacks in soundness.

It is the opinion of many that the *Hollywood Reporter*, being properly catalogued in the industry as the rich man's newspaper, is hardly a large enough subject for an editorial. Normally, that would be true. But now with the whole future of the industry vitally concerned with public opinion and a united front in times of adversity, Mr. Wilkerson has finally achieved stature. At long last we find that the *Hollywood Reporter*, like athlete's foot, cannot always be ignored.

An examination of the manner in which Mr. Wilkerson conducts his trade paper may be of some value. It lives on two things: advertising and a gossip column. As the Screen Writers' Guild membership long since voted against any

form of professional advertising our names were jotted down in his little black book. For a number of years the authors of original stories and screenplays were never mentioned in his reviews. Even when he was most hysterically charmed with a picture, a charm that did not necessarily mean he had been in any way influenced by the advertising department, he carefully refrained from mentioning there must have been someone who wrote the story.

Mr. Wilkerson was quite within his rights in so doing. There are many people who still like the stork fable and others who like the Topsy legend, and the *Hollywood Reporter* was among them. He had handed down an edict that there were no such things as screen writers and that stories just grew and there was just one unsightly blemish in the private world of William Wilkerson. There was another trade paper called *The Daily Variety* and while it received no advertising from writers either, it consistently mentioned the fact that there were such things. Dwelling in a partisan world, Mr. Wilkerson felt this was a dangerous thing. But unable to do much about it, he turned his spleen on the source of his discontent: the writers, and the way they went around demanding their rights just as if they were producers or exhibitors. Mr. Wilkerson always had an eye for treason.

He had his great chance to become a defender of the faith when nine members of this guild of 1400 were cited for contempt by the House of Representatives' Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities. No man to be caught with his flag down, Mr. Wilkerson charged into the fray, handsomely mounted on his editorial column. That the Guild has no control over the actions nor any legal or moral responsibility for the failure of these nine members to answer questions regarding their private convictions was all the *Hollywood Reporter* needed. Mr. Wilkerson became a committee of one, dedicated to indicting the *whole* Screen Writers' Guild.

He was, we were to learn, a man who had always worn rose colored glasses. The final proof of the treachery of the entire Guild was soon revealed in his editorial column. The Guild had an election, something that happens each year, and while it elected a president, officers and an executive board who can and will comply with the Taft-Hartley stipulations if it becomes necessary, this "sweetly smelling new board" was but another dagger in his side. The board went after the problems regarding the entire membership, without asking who was right and who was left, and this was the real dirty work at the crossroads. Not a member of the Guild was lynched and Mr. Wilkerson's chagrin grew more violent with each editorial.

His last attack on this Guild appeared in the *Hollywood Reporter* of January 19th, This Year of Fright. Sheridan Gibney, as president, was personally invited to prove he was a 200% American and the editorial ended with the burning demand that Mr. Gibney "stand up and be counted." Mr. Gibney, while somewhat confused at finding himself so suddenly regarded in the plural, promptly dispatched a letter to Mr. Wilkerson. He asked that his reply be printed in the pages of the *Reporter* and at the time this magazine went to press Mr. Wilkerson had managed to avoid doing this.



**T**HAT brings us to a point often raised with newspapers and magazines in this country. It involves the use of the word "ethics." This is a six-letter word found in the most elementary dictionaries and the general press of the nation. It involves making retractions when misstatements are proven, it involves giving a person attacked the privilege of replying in the paper in which he was attacked, it involves many things that even a publisher who was only 100% American should know. But Mr. Wilkerson feels his subscribers deserve only what he has personally screened for them.

If Mr. Wilkerson had wished to prove he was not yet ready to become Jack Armstrong, All American Boy, he could not have chosen a better method. It does not matter now whether he finally prints Mr. Gibney's letter or not. For, following an elementary rule of dubious journalism, there are editors who delay such letters and demands for retractions until the original injury has been almost forgotten, except by those injured. The delay stops the reader from recalling just exactly what was said in the first place and, in the case of Mr. Wilkerson, it also affords him time to ponder an answer. There is always the chance that during this stagewait, Mr. Gibney or one of the members of the board will be proven a member of some subversive group such as the Elks or American Legion and can be hung from another street lamp.

**N**OW, for the benefit of anyone who came in late, herewith is a copy of Sheridan Gibney's letter to the above mentioned party. It is printed in full, without benefit of capitals, exclamation points or those other gimmicks so thoughtfully used in Mr. Wilkerson's paper. All it says is what it says.

Mr. W. R. Wilkerson  
Hollywood Reporter  
Hollywood, California.

"January 19, 1948

Dear Mr. Wilkerson:

Again I find it necessary to answer your attack upon the Executive Board of the Screen Writers' Guild appearing in your Trade Views of January 19. This time you attack both the Board and me personally in the following words:

'Sheridan Gibney and his new Board have done little to clear the air. Rather than take a clear-cut stand against the Reds, they have been content to piddle around with words and technicalities. To claim that a writer's politics is not the business of the Guild, IF those politics consist of being an agent of a foreign power, is dangerous nonsense. This IS the business of the Guild. Instead of shielding such people, the Guild should make every effort to expose them.'

In answer to this impertinent and irresponsible charge I can only say that no department of the United States government, which is properly concerned with such matters, has yet informed the Screen Writers' Guild that it was shielding agents of a foreign power or has solicited

our aid in exposing them. It seems to me highly improper that you should supersede the authority of the FBI, the Department of Justice, and the Congress of the United States and take it upon yourself to tell me or anyone else what his duties are as an American citizen; and in so far as my duties as president of the Screen Writers' Guild are concerned, I shall hold myself answerable only to the members of the organization, its Constitution and By-laws.

I am also firmly convinced that your repeated attacks upon the Screen Writers' Guild are performing a great disservice to the motion picture industry and immeasurably damaging it in the eyes of the public; therefore I shall make it my business to bring this matter to the attention of the All-Industry Public Relations Committee.

Will you please print this letter at the earliest possible moment in the *Hollywood Reporter*?

Sincerely,

SHERIDAN GIBNEY"

In continuing this examination of the dry rot that should hardly be of value to an industry intent on getting on a sound basis, both economically and in a public relations sense, we might ponder over whether Mr. Wilkerson, in his own Topsy tradition, just grew. If so he should be recalled with some lingering nostalgia, not unlike Henry's Restaurant, the Montmartre Cafe, and the night the Marx Brothers put their footprints in Grauman's Chinese Theater.

If by any chance he had a forced growth it is about time the moonlight waltz ended. Not that it hasn't been lovely but there are big things stirring in the world, in this country, and in our own business. At this very moment when all groups within the industry are endeavoring to create a public relations committee, Mr. Wilkerson's continued discords in selecting any one group as his private whipping boy and subject of rainy day editorials belong in the past. The future is a rugged one and hardly the place for a tone deaf editor.

When, with other labor groups and guilds, we become an integrated part of a Public Relations Committee that is striving to present a true picture of the Hollywood scene to the American public, we trust Mr. Wilkerson will discover his bass drum is a bit outdated. In the past he beat it with such violence that it sounded like many things, and no one could tell which was the beat and which was the echo.

It is not that we expect a man of his mature years to suddenly love us as brothers. But as a punching bag who served him well we just want to remind him that even punching bags sometimes fly out of the socket and, sadly enough, tag the man who has beat them so lovingly and for so many years.

There is a future ahead for Hollywood that is going to be precisely what we make it. Mr. Wilkerson has always been a great one for parades and now that he sees it coming down the street perhaps we could ask him one question.

In his own phrase, *would he now like to stand up and be counted?*

..... RICHARD ENGLISH



# Hollywood! You've Been Warned

NORMAN LEE

*NORMAN LEE is the well-known British writer-director. A member of the British Screen Writers' Association, he is a novelist, and the author of A Film Is Born, a review of the world film industry.*

ONCE Hollywood produced the best films in the world. That was back in the 1930's. But during the war, making use of her screens for propaganda, Britain partially closed the gap. She drew almost level with the American product. Now, in the Peace, she has raced so far ahead that you can hardly see Hollywood's stars for the dust kicked up by our own James Mason.

Having got away to a flying start Britain is determined never to fall too far behind. Some Britishers think we have got Hollywood licked. And that if things get really bad down California way we might buy the joints.

This is not my idea, or the view held by competent film authorities here. We realize that Hollywood has plenty on the ball but you can't blame us for making the best of our good luck.

In case the Hollywood moguls aren't aware of the menace to their security I am giving them a friendly warning. In a colony where Yes-Men are paramount it well may be that the Metro lion is slumbering. But lions have a way of suddenly roaring into action just when you think they are comatose.

There was a time when, here in Britain, any old Hollywood love picture would lure the English woman from her pots and pans to wallow in the sticky sentiments of the current film fashions.

But Love as a film topic hasn't quite the same pull now. Once it was the core of an English woman's existence. But seven years of war made a lot of changes; mostly temporary ones but changes just the same. Talk to the average woman over here about sex and she looks faintly bored. Mention a three-point steak, chicken-en-casserole or Nylons and her eyes glitter and her bosom begins to heave.

Let me quote you from a speech by Dr. Wand, Bishop of London:

"From Hollywood our young women are taught that love is an overwhelming impulse, without rhyme or

reason, which must at all costs be obeyed. It does not matter if it implies stealing someone else's husband or fiancé. It does not matter whether every single consideration of suitability would be against its satisfaction. Anyone who would dare to put an obstacle in the way is regarded not merely as a spoil-sport but as a positive enemy of the human race."

The Bishop doesn't finish there.

He adds:

"As this is the kind of idea which is impressed upon the rising generation in most of the films they see, it is small wonder that so many disasters occur.

"There is, in fact, going on an extensive propaganda, probably all the more insidious because it is not deliberate, against the whole traditional conception of the proper relation between the sexes."

Dr. Wand expresses what the British people are thinking for themselves, believe it or not.

To us love and glamour is no longer the beginning and the end. We have become a grim, down-to-earth people, fighting for existence. That is why we say that a sordid, depressing picture like *Odd Man Out* is a masterpiece. We see in it the reflection of our recent lives. But Rita Hayworth, draped in white mink, drinking champagne at the Silver Horseshoe, doesn't mean a thing. We don't believe it and we wouldn't care if we did.

BRITISH films are on the top because they do not pander to out-of-date emotional ideas. They present simple, modern problems in a vital way. Simplicity is, in fact, the keynote. Our films get to the heart of things. They are less concerned with what people *do* than what they *think*. The psychological slant. Mental perception, rather than physical action.

That doesn't mean that we can't be tough in our pictures. In our own way we can. Not in the Bogart-Ladd-Bacall tradition, perhaps. But if you want to

## HOLLYWOOD! YOU'VE BEEN WARNED

see how the British handle a tough subject, catch up on *Odd Man Out*. It stars James Mason. (British films often do.) In this picture Mason displays a courage and resolution that makes H. Bogart look like a small boy with a toy pistol.

In certain specialist lines Hollywood has it all over Britain. *The Virginians*, *Grand Canyon*, *Abilene Town*, *Stage Coach*, *The Chisholm Trail*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Duel in the Sun*. Any wide-open spaces story based on American history. We came close with our Australian cattle film *The Overlanders*, but America had already blazed the trail with *The Thundering Herd*.

We have never surpassed America's *Saratoga Trunk*, *Gilda*, *Love Letters*, *They Were Expendable*, *The House on 92nd Street* or that magnificent epic, *The Fighting Lady*.

And we could not, with all our resources brought to bear, have excelled *The Best Years of Our Lives*. We have no director in Great Britain to equal William Wyler. And we have nothing like Orson Welles. Or producers who can overshadow David O. Selznick or that pulsating genius Darryl Zanuck.

Because we are a sober nation I doubt if we could have produced *The Lost Week-End*. The Americans, at first hand, know more about hootch (and missing week-ends) than we do. They have had Prohibition; we have not.

**A**MERICANS can easily best the British at comedy. Hollywood's slick, glittering funnies are incomparable. I have written over 40 British comedies and would give my income tax rebates for ten years to have turned out one film half as good as *The Bride Wore Boots*.

Before the (last) war British screen players were practically unknown in America. (Many were unknown twenty miles from London.) But today most Americans have heard of Margaret ("Wicked Lady") Lockwood, Anne ("Queen Victoria") Neagle, Ann ("Seventh Veil") Todd and Laurence ("Henry V") Olivier. Pat Roc, Phyllis Calvert, Pat Kirkwood and (of course) James Mason are already internationally famous.

It proves we have also learned how to advertise. Ten years ago even James Mason wouldn't have taken a van load of wild cats to America. Or lambasted his bosses in print. (And remember that Cyril Gardner, Ida Lupino, Errol Flynn, Claude Rains, Cary Grant, David Niven, Madeline Carroll and Vivien Leigh are also British. Even Greer Garson hails from Northern Ireland, a British province.) And one of Hollywood's leading directors, Alfred Hitchcock, is a London lad.

British films recently appearing in America include *Great Expectations*, *Stairway to Heaven*, *Brief Encounter*, *The Adventuress*, *Way to the Stars*, *The Seventh Veil* and *Odd Man Out*.

In certain technical departments Hollywood is ahead of us. And where not ahead of us she taught us all we know.

Photography, for instance. I think America contributed greatly to the education of our photographers, who are now among the best in the world. But not in the colour medium. Technicolor still leads. That is the position as I see it today. Tomorrow may change everything. Before long we Britishers may be using German Agfa. There is no colour medium to beat it.

**A**MERICA has made immense strides in sound equipment. But in the imaginative use of sound we can equal anything Hollywood has produced. British director Alfred Hitchcock was the first to use sound with any degree of art in the first English all-talkie *Blackmail*.

One of the drawbacks to the production of successful entertainment is interference. When Big Business sits on the shoulders of creative artists the result is usually hotch-potch. Bankers cannot make great motion pictures, not even good ones. Not even British bankers.

In Britain all that muddling, nerve-wracking interference is going by the board. We have intelligent producers like the Italian born P. Del Giudice, who says: "I give my producers plenty of free rope, yes? I do not shout 'You must'; I whisper 'I suggest'. Diplomacy she is a ver' good thing. She has made me plenty good motion picts. Yes? No?"

The answer is "Yes", because among Mr. Giudice's "motion picts" are winners like *In Which We Serve*, *Odd Man Out*, *Great Expectations* and *Blithe Spirit*.

J. Arthur Rank has given complete freedom to our writers. The real brains of the motion picture business is in the skull of the author but the studio producers did not seem to realize it until J. Arthur Rank unlocked the fetters from the wrists of the writing slaves and set them free. Lincoln never did a better job.

Now our best films are written, directed and produced by writers. Men like Frank Launder ("I See a Dark Stranger"), Sidney Gilliat ("A Rake's Progress"), Leslie Arliss ("The Wicked Lady" and "The Man in Grey"), Eric Ambler ("Journey Into Fear"), Emeric Pressburger ("Stairway to Heaven"), Noel Coward ("Brief Encounter") and Bernard Shaw ("Caesar and Cleopatra").

We avoid duplication in our stories. Hollywood falls down badly here. Having found the formula for suc-



cess she rubber stamps it. The Local Boy Makes Good story. The Bad Woman story. The Road to Anywhere formula. The Avenger pattern. Fifty titles and only one story.

Hollywood, with the best writers in the world on its payroll, has let them get into a rut.

**T**HE British do not deal in formulas. They deal in things that could happen. Life as we experience it. People who live and breathe. History in the making. Our dialogue is witty and pungent. We have few clichés. (A cliché, for your information, Joe, is "So what?" "Let's get outta here", or "On your way, sister"). Hollywood is big enough to take this well-meaning criticism and do something about it. With all the resources at her command she need not get into this kind of groove.

We are not finding it easy to make films in Britain. Government restrictions prevent building of studios, and we are vitally short of floor space. To get round it we are sending units abroad to France, Egypt, Italy and South Africa.

We are not so poor that we cannot find money for films. J. Arthur Rank has untold millions, made from flour. Lady Yule (British National Pictures) is said to have 80,000,000 dollars, made from jute. Associated British capital runs into several millions, made from films. And then, of course, there is Sir Alexander Korda. Any country boasting Korda as its purveyor of pictures, always provided that the bespectacled wizard can have a free (if lavish) hand, is likely to win the battle on its own. Right now, Sir Alexander is Rank's biggest competitor. Korda is fairly dazzling us with stardust, star names, and the magnitude of his plans and ideas.

It's anybody's guess how this Korda-Rank contest will end, but mine is that either (1) one will swallow the other or (2) they will merge. And I don't think Sir Alexander has any mergers in mind. In a recent profile article for a British magazine I made the same suggestions (about the Rank-Korda future) and Sir Alexander okayed the article without change.

\* \* \*

One of our difficulties over here has been the shortage of star material. The few star-sized players we had were soon mopped up by the rapacious film machines. And there did not seem to be many promising newcomers on the film horizon. Rank has a Charm School, from which, at intervals, interesting new people emerge. But from its first inception to the time of writing I have not seen any sensational discoveries.

The screen moguls began casting their nets in other waters and turned their attention toward Ireland. And

sure enough, they returned with a glittering catch. The late John McCormick (not the singer!), Kathleen Ryan, Denis O'Dea, Mrs. O'Dea, and half a score of others, all from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, were signed for a succession of pictures. What a hit these Irishers made! And how they could act! Two of them (McCormick and Ryan) had no desire to be film stars at all, at all.

The thousands a year offered by the Kordas and the Ranks apparently didn't mean a thing. Those simple Irish natives merely wanted to be left in peace. Miss Ryan, a star if ever there was one, actually did bolt in a frightened scurry back to Cork and her doctor husband. Rank sent special agent Constance Chapman to Ireland and Ryan eventually signed on the dotted line, but only under protest.

Mr. and Mrs. Denis O'Dea (he plays the Police Inspector in *Odd Man Out*) also weakened, but not until 40,000 had been clapped on to the salaries they had just been receiving. "We'd asked 'em that much," said Denis, "because we were sure they'd refuse it. An' by all that's holy they accepted it! What can ye do with people like that?"

We Britishers were making sure, of course, that Hollywood didn't get them. The trouble with these particular Irish is that they won't take dough for an answer.

Anyway, now film-land is crazy about them and the experts say these natural players, with their humanity, sincerity and soft speech, are going to change the face of things. So far, two recent Irish subjects (*Odd Man Out*, *I See A Dark Stranger*) have been smash hits. And *Captain Boycott*, another Irish tale, promises to equal them in quality and appeal. When your bobby-soxers have seen Dermot Walsh of Dublin and Keiron Moore of Cork, two dark-eyed romantic male types, I think half your Hollywood juveniles will take a gun into the bedroom and finish it all.

**B** RITAIN can promise you some important technical surprises later on. Except for some experiments by Orson Welles and the progress of technicolor, Hollywood's most important contribution was D. W. Griffith's discovery of the mobile camera.

The British backroom boys are now busy on research. You may shortly expect to hear about these discoveries:

- (1) A system of lighting that will cut down costs of juice by 60%.
- (2) Infra red camera for night location work.
- (3) A focus equaliser that will give the same sharpness to near and far objects as the human eye.
- (4) A camera that photographs sound and picture together.

- (5) A production system that will lop 60% off all picture costs.
- (6) A startling back projection invention that will make scrap of the present system.

Well, summing it all up I find the situation to be this:

(1) Britain has forged ahead as a picture maker and temporarily left America some lengths behind. It has never happened before in the history of films and if we do not make the best of this chance it will never happen again.

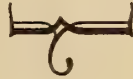
(2) America has greater resources in personnel and materials than we have and when she realises the threat to her supremacy she'll soon do something about it.

(3) Then, like the Korda-Rank contest, it will be

a neck-and-neck race and the public on both sides of the Atlantic are going to benefit, because they will get for their shillings and dollars the most scintillating entertainment that has ever appeared on the screens of the world.

That is all to the good. Films have an immense value and the better their quality the better the advertisement for the country concerned. Rank, Korda, Selzick and Zanuck are greater ambassadors than Bevin or General Marshall.

If America continues to go for British films in a big way and Britain recaptures her interest in Hollywood's product we don't need to trouble about the pettifogging arguments of our respective politicians. The peoples of the two hemispheres will understand each other so well that all differences will be automatically settled.





## Book Reviews

I HAVE been lucky enough to get hold of a bound volume of *The Buffalo Express* during the years when Mark Twain was half owner and editor. There is also a batch of letters written by his wife. Together they form a new idea of what these two thought about God and actors, among other things.

Several years ago a motion picture was made of their life together. Of it one theatre owner wired the studio: **REPORTED DEATH OF MARK TWAIN NOT EXAGGERATED HE JUST DIED IN MY THEATRE.**

What did the well-made, honest, respectful picture miss of their real life? Reading the material I have found, I would say a great deal. It shows a side of their personalities that has been little written of, or filmed.

Mark Twain was lying low, working like a horse, trying to think that here, under the enormous elipsis of lake moons, as a partner of *The Buffalo Express* he would remain the rest of his life. It was a big village paper. Its files show it to be like a hundred other newspapers of its time. Mark Twain worked on it from twelve to fourteen hours a day, yet he lacked the picturesque untidiness, the wit and sting of his later work.

Sitting at his desk, coatless, tie and collar on the chair beside him, sometimes his heavy shoes tossed into a corner, he sat on his spine, cutting, clipping, pasting and writing little paragraphs. The days of the newspaper services were not yet — and every editor used columns from other papers, and expected the other papers to do the same to him. Journalism was still an evolutionary society, and only in our times has it gone back to living in trees.

Mark was young, in love, married—just married. He worked, went home,

saw very few people, slept, went back in the morning to the office. A correct figure in a Presbyterian heaven—a young healthy male making a living.

In the files of *The Express* there is little of importance—both as newspaper work or as something that was to mean anything to the later Mark Twain. Even the rough diamond joviality of the mining camps was packed away with the wedding gifts.

He was a political innocent. Later he could go into rages over men and politics. He was at that time a rampant, non-habit-forming Republican. There is nothing wrong in that. The southland, the river, the wild companions of the mines were all, he felt, behind him. This was the new, good, genteel settled life. If it bored him he made no mention of it anywhere. Those critics who think he was unhappy are guessing. He was a good citizen with a furled umbrella, exhilarated with a young bride.

He wrote editorials. He firmly believed in his editorials; they were bad. There is a transparent absurdity about journalism that Mark was to discover later.

Mark Twain could never have written about two sides of any question. The Official Biographer — a psychic lug in white flannel pants — says of Mark's editorials: "*They are fearless, scathing, terrific.*" In what sense terrific, I do not know. Maybe irrelevant in the *Time-Life* meaning.

Writing of some farmers who had committed sexual rough-house on a couple no better than they should have been, Mark does say: "*They are the very bastards of the devil.*" Strong talk, showing that even in those days a man could use full-flavored words, if he did not expect to circulate in Boston, or meet the top literary folk of the period hip to haunch.

In *The Galaxy*, Magazine of 1870,

Mark published *The Great Beef Contract* written a few years before, and dug up like a witty old reprobate for publication. There was also an ungentlemanly attack on the Reverend T. DeWitt Talmage, who had come out against poor people and workingmen appearing in the fashionable pews of his church, and soiling the sacred benches of God, built by successful people. The Reverend was, of course, entirely within his rights. He had worked hard to acquire a fashionable church and the good people to fill it. He had scurried far afield to get together fine and respectable churchgoers; most likely repainted the church and gilded the hand rails, gotten rid of the naked scriptural odor of a righteous Jewish God.

I have investigated the Reverend. He was a kind man. He prayed on his knees, in public, for the poor. He dressed neatly in black. His attack on workingmen in his church (not God's, you understand—he never claimed that) had this line: "*If you are going to kill the church thus with bad smells, I will have nothing to do with the work of evangelisation.*" He was, remember, entirely within his rights and his church brethren backed him up. Mark was wrong—but so angry that he lost his politeness.

Mark's attack on the Reverend says: "*If the subject of these remarks had been chosen among the original Twelve Apostles he would not have consorted with the rest, because he could not have stood the sea fishy smell of some of his comrades. . . .*"

Mark also—as usual—defended the Chinese who were being treated like tin-canned dogs on the West Coast. Refined citizens, good to their mothers, thought nothing of shooting a Chinese on sight, cutting off his pigtail with a blunt knife, or pouring coal oil on him and setting him on fire to warm their hands. Unlike O. Henry, he could not write he came



of a family "that had niggers to burn . . ." The heart of Mark Twain was big and the compressed love of many people rattled around in it. Almost as many loves as hates stirred in his system. Nothing came, of course, of his attack on the good soul Reverend Talmage. The poor went back to their saloons (who first said: work is the curse of the drinking class?) and God was worshipped by the well-washed and well-behaved as before.

But Mark Twain went on against a variety of grievances. He attacked another Reverend — one Reverend Sabine — who had declined to hold a church service over the aged and very dead remains of an actor, one George Holland. An actor! Everyone knew how actors lived. They were lazy fellows, one prevalent conviction of the day said. They fornicated with actresses, lived on fish roe and rare wines and were given to mouthing the words of the devil, as put down by a foul creature named Shakespeare, and others. I know nothing of George Holland. He may have been the very worst kind of a fellow; who mugged when a fellow actor had a line. Or given to intemperate words and good deeds. Mark's *The Indignity Put Upon the Remains of George Holland By The Reverend Mr. Sabine* is still good reading these days.

The Reverend stood firm to his convictions. He was not to be blasted from his holy way by a wild, long-haired Yahoo from the West. He calmly fluffed the holy lace on his pious sleeves and said: "*There is a little church around the corner that will, perhaps, permit the service.*"

Today, all actors know that Little Church Around The Corner. The Church of the Transfiguration. There is a memorial window there now to Edwin Booth. Services are held in memory of Joseph Jefferson. George Holland must rest easy, feeling he played a good scene, dead. . . . And the Reverend Mr. Sabine I'm sure is in heaven, driving the departed souls of motion picture actors and writers off the celestial grass. A stern, just man with tremulous vitriolic ideas of goodness. But God avoids him, I think, crossing over to the other side of the street. For God, too, is an actor on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Mrs. Clemens has been libeled for years. The Official Biographer has

embalmed her in the coy manner of a hairdresser priming his client for a D.A.R. pageant among the lower breeds. He says: "*She undertook the work of polishing and purifying her life companion. She was conservative, dainty, cultured, spiritual . . .*" Oh, for a filled pair of white flannel pants to kick!

Mark Twain did *not* eat peas with his knife, stab out his eye with the spoon in his coffee. He bathed, changed his linen, never appeared drunk at parties, or raped the servant girls. And his reputation for profanity is over-rated. If she ever undertook the work of polishing and purifying her life companion, it never went beyond remarks on his curse words—all new and odd to her, and insisting on neckties, and a place for his cigar ash. The myth that he was a border boor, and she the noble spirit of New England's Golden Age must go; with all the bad and shadowy psychological motivations worked out for her by the critics.

Buffalo was only *near* New England. Mrs. Clemens was neither the monster who destroyed Mark's best work, nor the dainty heroine out of Dickens' worst weeping spell.

"*She was conservative.*" True, she did not lead strikes, wear bloomers or smoke black cigars. She never had lovers, drank in secret, or beat her servant girls for nasty pleasures. She was a Buffalo girl, high strung—but to label her conservative is wrong. I have found a line in one of her letters: "*How fast time passes. Soon we shall all be dead a hundred years.*" That line is as good as anything Mark ever wrote. It certainly is better than a great deal he himself admired in his own work.

"*She . . . is dainty.*" She *was* sick all her life—but dainty? She gave birth to four children, of whom only one reached a full maturity. Her photographs are not of a dainty woman. They are of an ill woman with a great deal of character in her face. Her nose, mouth and ears were not dainty. They were large, well formed. She wore her hair drawn back into an ugly knot; a style of the period that set one's economic and social status.

"*She was cultured.*" She was not. Her education was very ordinary. Her reading was the usual dawdling stuff of the period. She never went

deeply into the classics. Her tastes were the taste of her time. The creature of the latter day critics may as well be destroyed here as any place; she never was of any great literary help to Mark Twain. She loved him, and a great deal of his wild humor annoyed her. She toned some of it down. She should have burned some of it instead. Mark was no judge of his wild moments. She made a few diplomatic changes in the texts. Nothing of any importance. A few *damns* and *hells* went out. She certainly at no time told him what to write. I do not think she liked his best work, the strong earthy parts of *Huck Finn* and certain things printed years after they were written. There is no record that she ever read the privately printed 1601 where Mark broke all restraints of polite lady talk.

Let us remember that whatever she may have thought of the unpublished literary efforts, she was no smug prig. She slept with this man, she carried his children, grew heavy with his pregnancies, she went through four childbirths. The sexual matters of husband and wife never shocked her. She was normal, she was physical and desirable. She was ill a great deal of the time. Mark nursed her, and the petty annoying intimacies of sickrooms did not leave her shy or repressed. Let us toss away the legend about Mrs. Clemens, let us judge her by the facts, by her period, by her background, not by the theories of literary critics out to push home a point taken from Freud, or the publisher's libido. Extensive hunting for emotional moles has spoiled a good many books.

"*She was spiritual.*" I find no record of it. She read her Bible in her youth. Everyone had to, then. She shared Mark's interest in dreams. She was ill, in high fever a great deal of the time. There's a certain spiritualness about lying ill in bed, but it is the false spiritual value of a body drained of energy, weary and numb. A lot of tired and diseased saints were made "holy" this way.

She lost an orthodox ritual view of God. Mark Twain in his usual twaddle blames himself for destroying her faith. For all the evidence I have been able to collect, she became what she was by the long, involved process of thinking it out. She was then a better realist than Mark. Mark to



the end of his life kept God, Satan, Heaven and Hell around him as mere literary properties. A sort of Rabelaisian bell-ringing was what he produced from these stage properties. Mrs. Clemens never went in for these stage effects and their common indecencies. Mark had never been too unorthodox in his early days. She had. At one time she had prayers in the house, grace at meals and a morning reading from the Bible. Mark amazed his old hell-damning friends by saying grace. None of this lasted long. She and he abandoned it quickly. His attacks on the Bible are the logic of a thinking animal, but they do not go very deep. He was no hypocrite. He did not believe in the Bible and said so. It contradicted his reason. he said. He lacked proper respect for a hermetically sealed culture.

He wrote of a personal God he believed in but it was a literary figure he invented, like his Satan. The attempts to gloss over certain facts in his life hide a great deal of his true emotions and his work. He did not wallow in mental sensuality.

He expected nothing after death and all he is today he well believed, is his books. If we cannot accept the books alone he hinted, he never existed for us. I do not intend to probe his evaluation of his own creed here.

I have tried to see him and Mrs. Clemens alive.

She lived, she loved and she died by his side, having made up her own mind. In time the myths about her will die. She was a woman of stronger character and more normal passions than her times or her critics admit. It was a better love story than the one they filmed.

ONE of the evils of the motion picture business has been the sad sight of everyone thinking they can write a screenplay, without being a screenwriter. A ghastly group of pictures have appeared written by actors, relatives, comics, producers, directors and even baseball players. The disaster of not using a screen writer for a screenplay is all around us.

I have just read a popular reprint of the novel, *The Paradine Case*, by

Robert Hichens. It is a very good novel. Let me quote John McCarten of *The New Yorker* on the writing of the screenplay: "One picture may be worth a thousand words, but you'll never prove it by David O. Selznick. Whenever Mr. Selznick decides to dictate a screenplay, he lowers himself into a kind of bubble bath of elocution and doesn't emerge until he's churned up enough soapy dialogue to blur the meagre outline of his ideas. In his latest work, *'The Paradine Case'*, he is at the top of his loquacious form. Mr. Selznick's characters talk so much that even the climactic scenes are hardly more stimulating than a high-school debate. The film does include, it is true, a few specimens of middle-period Selznick prose that might interest students of the Hollywood master. 'Photographs,' he points out, 'are the social footsteps of time.' And while that is sinking in, he has one of his ladies, considering the possible extinction of a fellow-member of the cast, remark, 'I hope they hang her—no, I don't like breaking pretty things.' The Selznick script must have caught Hitchcock napping." (End of quote.)

THERE are two new books that should be of special interest to screen writers. *Lewis and Clark: Partners in Discovery*, is the first authoritative biography of the two great explorers that I know of. Written by John Bakeless, author of the brilliant, but little known *Daniel Boone*, it is a remarkable book about two men whose adventures have never been done on the screen, and while there are certain fragments from their lives that have been put into screenplay form, everything I have read from studio files is banal, silly and rather dishonest. Here is a book of facts that immortalizes part of our great nation, and tells of those who set up milestones that others were to follow to blue water, and the fuller and wider west.

Lewis and Clark, in their own way, were good writers and both kept diaries which are quoted from; they make fine reading. Buffalo trails, grizzly bears, plants, Indian love life and passion appear in their journals, with a charm and honesty not often found in the usual bits of publishers'

Americana; in fact the word *Americana* has become almost a racket, and is a disgrace to book dealers and publishers. The faking and printing of rare items of Americana is one of the big industries out here, only a little below oranges, oil wells and sagas about non-drinking, singing cowhands. The wealth of new material in this fine book should be a welcome change.

THE other book of valuable material for the writer is *Showman of Vanity Fair: The Life of William Makepeace Thackeray*. The world and times of Thackeray, its fables, modes and desires is made of such solid stuff that it will never grow stale or out of fashion. Thackeray himself, the artist, writer, snob, tragic figure with a mad wife, and a reputation as a three-bottle man, wit and cynic, is also the author of that great source book for motion picture heroines, from Scarlett O'Hara to Amber of Zanuck. W.M.T. is a modern man, lost between desire for material things and a hope of spiritual greatness in his books.

It is too bad that this book is so badly written. Lionel Stevenson writes like a college professor, and after I finished the book I found out he was a college professor on some California campus. No man ever tried to write a duller book out of great material, and succeeded. Thackeray was a full, blustering male, drunk or sober, with an eye for a pretty girl, and a way of saying what he had to say to his friends and often to the world. He was a solid force, and damned his age for its prissy ways (not always in print, of course). And for all the author's efforts to check him with pink ribbons and lady-like manners he still comes out of this feeble volume a vital man with a hard, clear book that shows us the world of *Vanity Fair*.

I hope soon, in these pages, to review Thackeray's four volumes of *Notes and Letters*, which gives a better, fuller measure of the man. Any story teller, screen writer, or novelist, will be well repaid by a study of this tall, broken-nosed figure, who stirred up the muddy water under the very feet of the great (and wide) Victoria.

—STEPHEN LONGSTREET

## News Notes

★ Whit Burnett's *Story Magazine* has accepted Curt Siodmak's story *Epistles to the Germans* to be featured in the first appearance of the magazine as a quarterly on March 10th.

★ Lillian R. Bergquist, SWG member, has a novel being published January 2nd by William Murrow. Title: *Your Shot, Darling!* Written in collaboration with Irving Moore, Radio Writers' Guild member.

★ Screen rights to *Morning Star*, novelette by SWG member Robert Spencer Carr which ran in the *Saturday Evening Post* last December 6, have been purchased by Leland Hayward. The freak yarn, a science fantasy about visitors from planet Venus, has kicked up record-breaking quantities of fan mail—including an alleged message from Venus.

★ Film Projects, after a full year's survey of the educational film field, is producing a series of filmstrips on Shakespeare and His Plays to meet the demand of high school and college

instructors to aid in the teaching of English classics. Under the supervision of Paul Benard, formerly with Republic Pictures, the series includes *Shakespeare's England*, *Shakespeare the Man*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Julius Caesar*.

★ SWG member Harold Goldman has signed a contract with the Daniel Mayer Company for the London production of his play *Twice and Forever*, to open on or before September 1st. Mr. Goldman has also a story, *The Key In The Lock* appearing in the November 30th issue of *This Week*.

★ SWG member Tom Seller has two one-act plays *The Eternal Bride*, and *Young As You Look* being published by the Walter H. Baker Co., Boston.

★ Erwin Piscator announces the Dramatic Workshop Film Department of the New School for Social Research is adding new courses on phases of film production.

Geza Herczeg, who won the Academy Award for his screenplay *The Life of Emile Zola*, will conduct a Screenplay Writing Seminar.

Leo Hurwitz will conduct a Seminar in Film Techniques, devoting an entire semester to a detailed analysis of two feature films.

Richard La Pan, who was a screenplay writer at MGM for fifteen years, will lecture on Basic Screenplay Writing.

★ One-act plays by five SWG members ranked high in a recent survey of community theatre productions in America. The survey, conducted by the New York Stage for Action, listed *Talk In Darkness*, by Malvin Wald as number one, followed by Arthur Miller's *You're Next*. Others in the first ten were Ben Barzman's *The Case Of The Empty Purse*, Norman Corwin's *Red, White And Blue Network*, and Ben Bengal's *All Aboard*.

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A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE



DECEMBER 1, 1947 TO JANUARY 1, 1948

**A**

**GERALD D. ADAMS**  
Sole Screenplay THE GALLANT LEGION, Rep

**B**

**EDWARD BOCK**  
Joint Story (with Charles Marion) TRAPPED  
BY BOSTON BLACKIE, Col  
**MURIEL ROY BOLTON**  
Joint Screenplay (with Agnes Christine John-  
ston) MICKEY, Eagle-Lion  
**JOHN K. BUTLER**  
Joint Story (with Gerald Geraghty) THE  
GALLANT LEGION, Rep  
Additional Dialogue HEART OF VIRGINIA,  
Rep

**C**

**MYLES CONNOLLY**  
Joint Screenplay (with Anthony Veiller)  
STATE OF THE UNION, Par  
**EUGENE CONRAD**  
Story and Screenplay THE COBRA STRIKES,  
Eagle-Lion

**D**

**ALBERT DEMOND**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Bradbury  
Foote) KING OF THE GAMBLERS, Rep  
**MEL DINELLI**  
Sole Screenplay THE WINDOW, RKO

**E**

**KEN ENGLUND**  
Sole Screenplay GOOD SAM, Rainbow Pro-  
ductions

**F**

**BRADBURY FOOTE**  
Joint Original Screenplay (with Albert De-  
mond) KING OF THE GAMBLERS, Rep  
**MELVIN FRANK**  
Joint Screenplay (with Norman Panama)  
MR. BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM  
HOUSE, RKO

**G**

**KENNETH GAMET**  
Joint Screenplay (with Jo Pagano and Tom  
Kilpatrick) ADVENTURE IN SILVERADO,  
Col  
**GERALD GERAGHTY**  
Joint Story (with John K. Butler) THE  
GALLANT LEGION, Rep

**H**

**NORMAN HOUSTON**  
Sole Original Screenplay THE ARIZONA  
RANGER, RKO  
Joint Screenplay (with Ed Earl Repp) GUNS  
OF WRATH, RKO

**J**

**AGNES CHRISTINE JOHNSTON**  
Joint Screenplay (with Muriel Roy Bolton)  
MICKEY, Eagle-Lion

**K**

**GORDON KAHN**  
Joint Screenplay (with S. K. Lauren) DAN-  
GEROUS ILLUSION, Arthur Lyons  
**ROBERT E. KENT**  
Story Basis ASSIGNED TO DANGER, Eagle-  
Lion  
**TOM KILPATRICK**  
Joint Screenplay (with Kenneth Gamet and  
Jo Pagano) ADVENTURES IN SILVERADO,  
Col  
**JOHN KLOSER**  
Joint Story (with Leo McCarey) GOOD SAM,  
Rainbow Productions  
**MILTON KRIMS**  
Sole Screenplay THE IRON CURTAIN, Fox

**L**

**S. K. LAUREN**  
Joint Screenplay (with Gordon Kahn) DAN-  
GEROUS ILLUSION, Arthur Lyons  
**EUGENE LING**  
Sole Screenplay ASSIGNED TO DANGER,  
Eagle-Lion  
**WILLIAM LUDWIG**  
Sole Original Screenplay MASTER OF LAS-  
SIE, MGM

**M**

**CHARLES MARION**  
Joint Story (with Edward Bock) TRAPPED  
BY BOSTON BLACKIE, Col  
**HERB MEADOW**  
\*Contributor to Screenplay DANGEROUS IL-  
LUSION, Arthur Lyons

\*Academy Bulletin only

**N**

**FRANK S. NUGENT**  
Sole Screenplay WAR PARTY (Argosy Pic-  
tures) RKO

**P**

**JO PAGANO**  
Joint Screenplay (with Kenneth Gamet and  
Tom Kilpatrick) ADVENTURE IN SILVER-  
ADO, Col  
**NORMAN PANAMA**  
Joint Screenplay (with Melvin Frank) MR.  
BLANDINGS BUILDS HIS DREAM HOUSE,  
RKO  
**LOUIS POLLOCK**  
Sole Story PORT SAID, Col

**R**

**MATTHEW W. RAPP**  
Sole Screenplay RAMPAGE, Crestview Pro-  
ductions  
**ED EARL REPP**  
Sole Story and Joint Screenplay (with Nor-  
man Houston) GUNS OF WRATH, RKO  
**JACK ROBERTS**  
Sole Original Screenplay TROPICAL MAS-  
QUERADE (S) Par

**S**

**JERRY SACKHEIM**  
Sole Original Screenplay HEART OF VIR-  
GINIA, Rep  
**GEORGE SEATON**  
Sole Screenplay APARTMENT FOR PEGGY,  
Fox

**T**

**MAURICE TOMBRAGEL**  
Sole Screenplay TRAPPED BY BOSTON  
BLACKIE, Col

**V**

**ANTHONY VEILLER**  
Joint Screenplay (with Myles Connolly)  
STATE OF THE UNION, Par

**W**

**BRENDA WEISBERG**  
Sole Screenplay PORT SAID, Col  
**ROBERT C. WILLIAMS**  
Sole Original Screenplay TIMBER TRAIL, Rep  
Sole Original Screenplay THE BOLD FRON-  
TIERSMAN, Rep

In this listing of screen credits, published monthly in THE SCREEN WRITER, the following abbreviations are used:  
COL—Columbia Pictures Corporation; E-L—Eagle-Lion Studios; FOX—20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; GOLDWYN  
—Samuel Goldwyn Productions, Inc.; MGM—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios; MONO—Monogram Pictures Corporation;  
PAR—Paramount Pictures, Inc.; PRC—Producers Releasing Corporation of America; REP—Republic Productions, Inc.;  
RKO—RKO Radio Studios, Inc.; ROACH—Hal E. Roach Studio, Inc.; UA—United Artists Corporation; UNI-INT'L—  
Universal-International Pictures; UWP—United World Pictures; WB—Warner Brothers Studios. (S) designates screen short.

# NEXT MONTH AND THEREAFTER

SAMUEL FULLER

Write 'Em and Reap

MANUEL SEFF

The Original Story

DR. ARNOLD WELLES

Experiment in Reaction

MILT GROSS

— And Think of a Title, Will Ya?

TALBOT JENNINGS

Hollywood in Retrospect

WALTER H. SCHMIDT

The Cartoon World

RAYMOND CHANDLER

Qualified Farewell

And Further Articles by KEN McCORMICK, SAMSON RAPHAELSON, ISOBEL LENNART, STEPHEN LONGSTREET, HOWARD J. GREEN, RICHARD G. HUBLER, THORNTON DELEHANTY, MAX WILKINSON, EWING SCOTT, ERNEST PASCAL, and others.

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# The Screen Writer

UNEMPLOYMENT III: *The Original Story*

By

MANUEL SEFF, With an Editorial Foreword

MILT GROSS: *And Think of a Title, Will Ya*

ARTHUR L. MAYER: *An Education in Educational Films*

RICHARD BROOKS: *Swell Guy*

MALVIN WALD: *Cops and Writers*

DWIGHT TAYLOR: *The Story Expert*

STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY: *Field 10*

Editorial • SWG Studio Chairmen • Book Reviews  
Correspondence • Screen Credits





# Gunn Shots

By JAMES GUNN

SO far nothing has been heard from Albert Einstein or Princess Margaret Rose on the burning subject, "What's Wrong with Hollywood?", but at this rate it won't be long before either or both puts a new ribbon in the machine and starts pounding out the condemnations.

The critics range from the professional boys of New York and London, who get paid for it, to occasional contributors to this magazine, who do not.

There are veterans of the old Cinema group, who never felt really comfy with talkies and cry for a return to D. W. Griffith and pantomime. There are the Say Something Boys, who insist that a picture Say Something, on the socially conscious level of course, whether or not the social consciousness has the faintest connection with the story. Incidentally, quite a few art-lovers hold membership in both groups, which makes you wonder how a picture can say something if it isn't supposed to say something.

There are the fairly placid types who think all will be well on the day the Johnston Office and League of Decency are abolished. No writer will argue too hard about that, but there is always the thought that, should that happy day arrive, for every producer rushing to produce something by Zola, there would be five or six of the shoestring boys tying up the screen rights to *Maid in the Ozarks* or *Goodnight, Ladies*. And there are various maverick groups, like those campaigning for special pictures for children. (My only reply to them is that as a tot my favorite picture was a juicy little number in which Lilyan Tashman bumped off three husbands.)

There are the all-for-realism kids, whose only fault is an excess of zeal. Tired, like everyone else, of the gold dust Hollywood sometimes throws over its subjects, they have reacted to the point where—in theory and Sunday articles at least—they re-

(Continued on Page 26)

# The Screen Writer

Vol. 3, No. 10

MARCH, 1948

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# Unemployment III

*Business is looking up. Not enough to get excited about but enough to be encouraging. 26 more writers are employed this month than last. At this time 245 writers are employed in the major studios, 170 in the independents, for a total of 415.*

*But a lot of us are still trying to get well by selling an original. An original means a lump sum of money, and most of us, not too good business men to begin with, do better at getting reorganized with a lump sum than on salary.*

*For that reason, and the fact that hope springs eternal in a writer's breast, we recommend the following article on the original story, written by a man who knows some of the answers.*

..... EDITOR

---

## The Original Story

MANUEL SEFF

*MANUEL SEFF, coming to Hollywood after the success of his play Blessed Event, has written more than twenty-five screenplays and sold over twenty original stories to motion picture companies.*

IT will seem presumptuous indeed for one author to offer gratuitous advice to 1400 others on methods of practising their profession. But the postman had just delivered a pamphlet from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences giving a complete list of films released in this country during 1947, together with the sources of their plots. A train of thought was set off about the writing and sale of original motion picture stories which led to some research and the present dissertation.

Statistically, this Academy document is most revealing, throwing as it does, considerable light on that basic requirement in any occupation: Markets. These are the figures including, of course, only feature length productions:

Original Screen Plays.....	147
Original Stories.....	133
Other Material.....	167
<hr/>	
Total 1947 Pictures.....	447

Thus, 280 out of 447 stories released here last year were created directly for the screen, while 167 were based on produced plays or published fiction, with a negligible percentage having their genesis in reportorial magazine and newspaper articles. The occasional radio sketch that finds its way to the sound stages can be ignored in these calculations.

As we are concerned mainly with American pictures, it becomes necessary in arriving at the actual sum of



## THE SCREEN WRITER

home product to deduct 62 foreign films shown in our theatres, leaving a net balance of 385. This number I have broken down into component parts as they interest screen writers. Below is a listing of all pictures made in the United States, which were released in 1947, and the origin of their plots:

Original Screen Plays.....	138
Original Stories.....	129
Other Material.....	118

---

Total 1947 Pictures..... 385

It came as a great surprise—to me, in any event—that considerably more than two-thirds of the stories purchased for use in 1947 were written by members of the Screen Writers' Guild for the sole purpose of *direct* sale to studios. While these statistics were comforting, they merely tended to make my task more difficult. Inevitably, I assumed one cannot devise means of convincing the managements of M.G.M., Paramount, etc., that they would benefit immeasurably by purchasing more originals.

Suspecting an error in this line of reasoning, there popped into my head the thought, "Why not?" I put the question to half a dozen producers, all of whom echoed, "Why not?" They reminded me that costly, high-powered story departments, replete with readers, analysts, executives and secretaries are not maintained just for fun. Actually, one of them pointed out, Story Departments were not properly named; Story Hunting Departments would better describe their function. The entire world, including the Scandinavian, is under continual microscopic search for yarns that can eventually be run through projection machines. Were there a well-founded rumor that somebody in Kennebunkport or Birmingham had something that could be twisted, tortured, wrestled and manipulated into a pretty decent picture, scouts would be hopefully dispatched to those places.

SUCH being the condition, it is clear that there is a market just around the corner from Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street for many more original stories than we Guilders have been able to sell. Why then have we failed to achieve the utmost in this field, particularly at a time when so many skilled screen writers are unemployed? That is the problem which confronted me. I sought the solution through telephone calls and personal visits to men in authority. The conclusions, which I found interesting and enlightening, are given for what they are worth. It is my own belief that they are invaluable.

So that there cannot be the slightest misunderstand-

ing, I must say that these lines are not being set down ex cathedra, but are presented direct from people whose approval means that a story will be purchased. The inclusion of some experiences of my own in the creation and marketing of screen material seems unavoidable and is by no means meant to be a guide for my fellow authors.

It was rather a shock to learn that an overwhelming majority of stories submitted never pass beyond the first reader. Some editors place the figure at 90%. They are slipshod, haphazard attempts to obtain some fast money, and too often are marred by dull padding to give them an imposing appearance. I will return to this subject a little later.

With some exceptions, the process of buying is exceedingly tortuous and complicated, perhaps unnecessarily so. Naturally, I refer to the larger studios where these plots, adroitly summarized, are considered in capsule form. Assuming that a story has received the approbation of a reader, its wanderings and struggles for acceptance have only begun. Many minds review, deliberate and pass judgment. It may be that the company has already acquired something similar; or it is deemed unsuitable for any of their contract stars; possibly the subject is one in which the public has demonstrated a tremendous lack of interest.

In numerous cases something has gone wrong, during the course of a story's creation. Up to a point it is found fresh, well-planned and expertly written; then it suddenly begins to run downhill at an alarming rate of speed. Rejection can be the only result, for the producers have discovered through the years that their shelves become the final resting place of partially good originals that have defied all efforts to get them on the screen. Sadly they shake their heads at astronomical, red-inked numbers, melancholy testimony to hundreds of thousands of dollars wasted on these projects.

When the various boards and associates have jointly pointed thumbs up, it still remains for that supreme umpire, the executive producer, to sanction a purchase.

Considering these handicaps, it certainly needs no soothsayer to predict that now, in 1948, an original will receive scant attention unless it is done with infinite care. Characters must be supplied with some flesh and blood so that they come sufficiently to life to walk their little hour on the white sheet. No longer is it good enough to describe our leading man as, "Philip Stafford, about 28, tall and handsome," and let it go at that. Having wiggled out of their swaddling clothes, the movies demand considerable information about Mr. Stafford's background, habits and general outlook on the world.

**A**NOTHER required ingredient, to quote an executive, but age old to practitioners of the writing art, is suspense. This term covers more than merely the question of whether the hero or villain will be the first to reach the suffering ingenue. Broadly speaking, it means that the reader is unable to anticipate the next sequence, that he is eager to hurry on and find out what is going to happen, whether we are telling him about a walk down the street or a high school debate.

Therefore, these hastily contrived plots, almost entirely lacking in suspense and characterization, are returned to our agents with painful regularity. Regrettably enough, many of them begin with an excellent premise that never advances very far beyond its embryonic stage.

Perhaps I should clarify the various goals of movie writers, for doing a script with some outstanding star in mind is quite different a matter from aiming at the low budget producer with a cast consisting chiefly of horses. The so-called quickie is a product with which I am not too familiar, though I hasten to add that this is not said in any derogatory sense. Writing a tale to be filmed on a shoestring requires enormous talent, ingenuity and experience. I have often marveled at my friends who can turn out these sagas of the plains with comparative ease and proficiency. They are the real masters of suspense, but their reward unfortunately is only what the traffic will bear. Still, there are compensations. When such a western (or eastern) is concocted, no boards or committees act as judge and jury, no magnifying glass is trained on every detail to discover a reason why it should not be bought. There it is, lucid and packed with action. The one man who must be pleased knows exactly what he wants; his Yes or No is forthcoming instantaneously.

**L**ET us then focus on the more expensive productions, ranging in cost from \$300,000 to several millions. Granting that our story is a good one there are, I learned, valid reasons why it frequently never has a chance. Trying to peddle electric blankets in a tropical country would obviously be a foolhardy venture, yet that is precisely the sort of thing many of us attempt when we offer the type of yarn in which no studio could possibly be interested, or wouldn't touch with one of Ed Wynn's ten-foot poles. Off-hand, a few such taboos are repulsive diseases, ridicule of a friendly nation, and narcotics. Incredible as it sounds, it is on these very topics that some excellent plots have recently been submitted. I do not wish to intimate that magnificent literature has not been written on those themes, but the movies are too generally attended

to let down the bars at the moment. Besides, mass entertainment enterprises involve too great a financial risk, even assuming that motion pictures will eventually be permitted the latitude accorded other forms of story telling. The hazards of bringing out a book attacking the entire population of Switzerland, for example, are infinitesimal compared to those of making a picture on the same subject.

I am aware that Jay Kennedy has written and sold to Columbia a story about narcotics, which is complete and in release. As this was strictly forbidden by the Johnston code, I made some inquiries to discover how he managed this seemingly impossible feat. The explanation turned out to be most illuminating. Mr. Kennedy first placed a rough draft of his idea before officials of the United States Treasury Department, devoting considerable time and effort to convincing them that the showing of such a picture would be of inestimable educational value. Having obtained their consent and agreement to cooperate, he then offered an enlarged version in treatment form to Harry Cohn, who not only found the plot a superior one of its kind, but recognized the advantages of being backed up by a government agency. For his imagination and resourcefulness we must raise our hats to Mr. Kennedy. He created his own market. No doubt, hundreds of us, hearing of Mr. Kennedy's strategy, said to ourselves, "*I wish I had thought of that.*" I would venture to say that many such opportunities exist, eagerly awaiting conversion into a scenario, and no less eagerly wanted by film moguls.

**W**HEN I was employed by Warner Brothers during the regime of Darryl Zanuck, and later that of Hal Wallis, the ideas for many fine melodramas were found in newspaper headlines. Recently, I read that the astounding exploits of Hans Van Meergeren, the Hollander who painted practically undetectable imitations of Vermeer masterpieces, have been bought for production. And it was not so many years ago that an enterprising writer called on Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan, parents of the five brothers who lost their lives on the same ship during the war. Result, an excellent picture, done by Twentieth Century and Sam Jaffe. Mr. Zanuck recently released *Northside 777*, which deals with a scrubwoman's battle to prove the innocence of her son while he is serving a long prison term. The inspiration for this film was an advertisement placed in the personal columns by his mother. She offered her life's savings to anyone who would come forward and name the real criminal. When an imaginative movie author reads a human interest item like that, he hurries to his typewriter to



fabricate the balance of the plot. For that is how mass entertainment is sometimes born. Another instance of real life transferred to the screen with admirable inventiveness is *Boomerang*, a well-made denunciation of injustice unearthed by Louis De Rochemont in the crime annals of Bridgeport, Conn., via the *Readers' Digest*.

Here we have evidence that Cinderella no longer controls exclusive rights to leading lady parts; that the Prince has lost his monopoly on leading male roles. The public, thankful for variety in its pictures, will form long lines at the box-offices of theatres even if they are showing accounts of murderers, thieves, arsonists, et al., just so long as they are interesting. The inevitable Boy and Girl can both be malefactors, love each other with unbridled passion, and still receive Mr. Johnston's indorsement. Of course, crime must not pay off to the author's brain children, but it can to him.

Simple mathematics reveal the sad fact that we do not take sufficient advantage of what is happening in the world around us. The percentage of plots derived from newspaper and magazine reports, as I have said, but which should be stressed, is ludicrously small. If I may be permitted at this point, to make a personal appearance upon the stage, it has been my custom since laboring in the cinema capital to subscribe to a dozen publications, some of them relatively obscure. One paragraph, one line, in these magazines and newspapers has frequently been the spark which ignited the creative flame.

I would like to remain before the footlights long enough to recite a few reasons why I (and occasional collaborators) have failed at the final moment to enter the gates of the promised land. If the illustrations cited can be of the slightest advantage to some of my 1400 brethren these pages will have served a useful purpose. The stories under consideration had been approved by the studio underlings, overlings, satraps and rajahs. But when the time for decision came around, when the yarns' fabric had been chemically analyzed, defects were discovered. A catalogue of these near-bullseyes is appended:

1. The highly censorable sex implications were inseparable from the fundamental plot. I made a mental note to remember Bernarr Macfadden's instructions to his editors: "The shadow of a bed can appear in our magazines, but never the bed itself."

2. The leading character was a crippled boy. A friend of mine, present when the verdict was handed down, informed me that there would have been no objections had I made the lad a secondary *dramatis personae*.

3. There were several divorces, thus taking too lightly the sacred institution of marriage. Whatever our personal opinion of non-governmental censorship, it does not originate with the producers. Observance of this restriction by us will prevent disappointment when it is enforced by the studios.

4. The public, by leaving thousands of theatre seats unoccupied, had given clear notice that its interest in backstage events was waning. I have found, however, that a ban of this sort often remains in effect only until some heretical producer ignores the current interdiction and brings out a smash hit dealing with the subject nobody wants to see. How many times have we heard, "No more fantasies," then found ourselves standing in line waiting to witness a superb film about an angel who came to earth?

Sliding again down the rabbit hole to that Wonderland where there is a crying need for more and more plots, I wish to pass on a few recommendations direct from buyers of tales. It is important in these times when grosses are blighted by the British tax and myriad other reasons that we SWG members give much thought to budgets. Why waste the creative impulse by including in our scenarios elaborate scenes requiring thousands of extras and exorbitant settings, particularly when they cannot be eliminated without so mutilating the story that a regretful veto is the ultimate judgment? This is not meant to imply that our entire action should occur in a single place. We must make compromises, weed out superfluous backgrounds. To screen writers of any experience whatever it is no world-shaking news that we can take our Mr. Stafford into the interior of a mosque without first establishing the locale by showing multitudes of salaried ladies and gentlemen outside masquerading as Moslems.

Romances between the Rich Boy and Poor Girl, or any normal combination of same, are still in great demand, but love alone finds itself back on the agent's desk. What will induce the lads in the front office to whip out their check books is the novel approach, the unique development, the surprise denouement. Cinderella and her Prince must have the New Look.

THE question of whether to submit a story in treatment form or as a screen play was also answered for me. It goes without saying that doing the full shooting script is a most risky venture. Because of the very nature of our profession, a work of this kind will receive prompt, fascinated attention if George Bernard Shaw's name is on the cover. Trumpets will summon the executive staff; feverishly increasing offers will burn the transatlantic cables. But "Original Screen Play by John Smith" isn't quite the same thing. True,

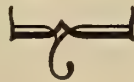
when Mr. Smith has toiled over a detailed scenario, complete with camera angles, it is granted somewhat more consideration than the customary outline. If purchased, the price will be much higher. It is like gambling. The more you put in, the more you take out—if you win. A pundit whose opinions I have learned to respect advocates a middle course when we are aspiring to the bigger money: Part of the screen play, roughly one-third, plus the balance in detailed treatment.

The Scheherazade method of presentation has come into some vogue again in recent years. Standing up before a producer and reciting our tale can be successful, depending on circumstances. It is usually an attempt to make an optional deal during the stage of preparation when our story is worked out, though no actual writing has been done. I believe that our enthusiastic representatives favor this more than we do. In a corner of the office there is usually seated an unobtrusive young lady, equipped with note book and pencil. The skill with which she condenses our narration for later examination by the higher authorities could mean the difference between victory and defeat.

After all, the producer himself can insist on an immediate cash and carry transaction, but he can also be outvoted, unless complete autonomy is his. How the boys up front cast their ballots is determined to a great extent by what the lady delivers to them—always assuming it's a good yarn. One movie author, a seductively persuasive raconteur, makes it a practice to direct most of his recital at the synopsisizing damsel. For her sweet sake he repeats key situations, emphasizes character relationships.

In some studios, when an offering has been passed through the lines by the outer guard, a zealous agent can make arrangements to have us recite the plot before an entire panel of the supreme command. Quoting again a Solomon of the scenarios, this method should be avoided unless we possess a little talent for oratory and salesmanship. "Get it on paper," he advises.

Harpo Marx may well have had original story writers in mind when he said of the late Alexander Woollcott, "He was a dreamer with a wonderful sense of double entry bookkeeping."





# A Letter From Thurman Arnold

*The following is a letter to Sheridan Gibney, SWG President, from Thurman Arnold, Abe Fortas, and Paul A. Porter, chosen to act as counsel for the Guild on all questions relating to the blacklisting of Guild members in accordance with the Johnston Statement.*

Mr. Sheridan Gibney, President,  
Screen Writers' Guild,  
Hollywood, California.

Dear Mr. Gibney:

At the request of your Board, we have undertaken to represent the Screen Writers' Guild in connection with the action taken by motion picture producers to discharge and blacklist artists and writers whose political views they deem to be objectionable. In accepting representation of the Guild in this matter, we think it important that the principles involved and the interest of the Guild be clearly defined.

The facts have been widely publicized. Nine Guild members were cited for contempt on the charge that they refused to state whether or not they were Communists and because they insisted that the Committee had no right to inquire into their political or trade union associations. The validity of their assertion of constitutional rights is now before the courts in an action to punish them for that contempt. We are not participating in these proceedings.

Shortly after the citation for contempt the Association of Motion Picture Producers — an organization of all the principal producers of feature pictures — met to consider what action the industry should take. They passed a joint resolution to discharge the writers who had defied the Thomas Committee and in addition to institute an effective industry boycott barring their literary work from the screen. The Association gave these writers a choice either to recant their present views as to the power of the Thomas Committee or to abandon their chosen profession.

Thus an issue of paramount public importance is squarely presented by the action of the producers' group. They have set up what is in effect a private court. This self-constituted tribunal has neither a marshal nor a

sheriff. It nevertheless has effective power to carry out its decrees through the concerted action of its members. It sits in judgment on the moral fitness of artists to write for the screen, leaving out of consideration the quality of their work. To say that the usurpation of such judicial power by a group of private corporations who dominate motion picture production is dangerous in its implications and consequences, is an understatement. It threatens the very foundation of freedom of artistic expression on the screen. The Screen Writers' Guild cannot ignore this issue. It becomes its duty to present it in every appropriate forum where it can be heard.

The screen writers involved have brought suits against various members of the combination. They contemplate other proceedings. It is not the purpose of the Guild to afford legal aid to the individual writers but rather to represent the public interest involved in these cases. The heart of the public issue is not breach of contract but the concerted action of the industry barring these writers from the screen. This goes far beyond the mere protection of private rights.

If this were a case of capricious or unjust action on the part of an individual producer there might be some doubt as to the Guild's duty to intervene. The Guild membership includes writers of diverse political and economic views and of widely varying interests. Many of those who support this action do not agree with the position taken before the Committee by their fellow members. If any single producer had broken his contracts with these writers on the ground that he thought their conduct contemptuous of Congress, their views radical and their assertion of constitutional right hypocritical, the matter would not assume its present public importance. Public danger from individual action, however oppressive and unjust, is slight. For example, had an individual producer refused to exhibit *Lady*

## THE SCREEN WRITER

*Windemere's Fan* on the ground that Oscar Wilde was an unsavory character, someone else would have undoubtedly shown the play. The public would not have been deprived of the opportunity to judge it on its merits. But had a group controlling the theatres barred the play by joint action the public would never have had opportunity to judge it. Such an exercise by a combination of private individuals of a power to judge the fitness of artists and penalize them for misconduct raises an issue that far transcends the current dispute whether the writers cited for contempt were morally right or wrong in their views and conduct. It is dangerous in its probable consequences and effect not only on motion pictures but on books, on the press, indeed on every form of literary or political expression.

The action taken is without precedent in the motion picture industry. Heretofore some censorship has been exercised by joint action of producers. Its purpose is to make the screen plays clean and wholesome. This censorship has been attacked by many who thought that the screen should enjoy the same freedom as the theatre and the bookseller. They have deplored the fact that subjects legitimately dealt with in nationwide best sellers cannot be adequately treated on the screen. Those who defend this censorship point out that if it is not undertaken voluntarily by the motion picture industry there is danger of oppressive local censorship. Whatever the merits of that controversy are they are not in issue here. This is not an attempt to judge the play itself; it is rather a judgment on the morals, political views and the conduct of the writer himself. It is not limited to decency. It extends to political conformity. Artists are habitually nonconformists. Nonconformity is a consequence of originality. If the character, morals or political views of writers were ever made the test of the production of their works, our library shelves would lose their finest books and our theatres could not show their best plays. The dead hand of conventional mediocrity would reduce the screen to the level of comic strips. Only in a time of hysteria is it necessary even to argue this point.

The kind of blacklist instituted here is new to the industry. In the past there has been no attempt to impose a joint censorship of the ideas of writers. The use of the Motion Picture Producers' Association as a meeting place to institute such action was unthinkable. It was first suggested by the Committee on Un-American Activities itself. Congressman Vail asked Mr. Jack Warner:

"Wouldn't such an association provide a splendid piece of machinery for distribution of information between producers as to the type of individuals who are employed by the industry and who are concerned with subversive activities?"

Mr. Warner replied that such a suggestion had never been brought up in the association "in any manner, shape or form by word or written form to my knowledge." He continued:

"Of course, I don't believe it would be legal in my opinion." He went on: "I would not be a party to it and neither would any of the other men, from my knowledge of them."

Mr. Vail pressed him further on the desirability of an association boycott. Mr. Warner replied:

"That sounds rather logical but it doesn't hold water. . . . I wouldn't be a party with anyone in an association, especially where you would be liable for having a fellow's livelihood impaired; I wouldn't want to do that."

We believe that Mr. Warner's remarks represented the opinion of the leaders of the industry before they were intimidated by the Committee. The industry realized not only the impropriety but the illegality of joint action. Nevertheless, they apparently thought it worthwhile to run the risk of paying damages to appease the Committee and compel everyone in the motion picture industry to conform to the standards of suppression set by the Committee on its own motion and never enacted into law. Thus, they have surrendered the independence of the motion picture industry. They have created a condition of fear and subservience that is spreading all over the screen and the stultifying effects of which will soon be felt by the American audiences.

It is important that our market for goods be free so that any manufacturer can use his originality and produce anything he chooses. It is even more important that our market for plays, books and artistic expression be not dominated by any set of ideas adopted by any combinations of corporations. We believe that the writers themselves can collect damages for the injury done to them. But the trial of damage suits here is inadequate public protection. The motion picture producers acted in full realization that they might have to respond in damages. In such a situation damages are clearly not an effective deterrent. It must be the function of the Guild to prove to the Association of producers that this kind of a subservient industry is not what the American people want. This must be done by representing these principles and this point of view independently of the private interests of the individual writers in every proceeding where they are relevant.

It is too early to discuss the exact nature of the proceedings which we may advise the Guild to institute. It is sufficient now to outline the principles which these proceedings are intended to promote in the motion picture industry.

We wish to indulge in no criticism of the motion



picture producers as individuals. They thought no doubt that they were acting in the interests of their stockholders and that they would make more money and have less trouble if they eliminated the nonconformists who were having difficulties with the Thomas Committee. But whatever the motive, the motion picture producers have surrendered the independence of a great public medium of expression. The motion picture industry is not theirs to surrender. Every artist, every writer, on the free exercise of whose talents the future of the industry depends, must resist this abject capitulation.

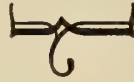
Unless the precedent established by the motion picture industry is set aside, there is a real danger that not only the motion picture industry but every avenue and form of expression will soon be subjected to the con-

trol of the Committee on Un-American Activities. If America is to remain free, all people including writers and artists must be free to speak and the people must be free to listen and to accept and reject the ideas expressed. Only those who have no faith in democracy and even less confidence in the American people will accept any other way of life.

It is for these reasons that we are glad to represent the Guild in this matter, and to assist in the establishment and vindication of the principles described above.

Sincerely,

(Signed) Thurman Arnold  
Abe Fortas  
Paul A. Porter



Baron Otto von Strahl, who lives at the Hollywood Hotel, has applied to the Guild for assistance in finding a collaborator in writing magazine articles.

The Baron and Baroness have had unusually wide and varied experience, ranging from Intelligence work in the German Police to lion hunting in South Africa, and to extensive research in psychic phenomena with some of the best-known European authorities in this field.

Anyone interested may find in this suggestion a fund of unusual material.

# ...And Think of a Title, Will Ya

MILT GROSS

*SWG member MILT GROSS is the internationally distinguished cartoonist and newspaper, magazine and screen writer. Among his best known books are Dunt Esk and I Shoulda Ate the Eclair.*

I was just telling a guy, I says to him, what is it some characters drink gets 'em that way, and he says how do you mean, and I says wait, I'll tell you.

I'm sitting there, I tell him, and the phone rings and I grab it and imitate a butler's voice, and the party on the other end pipes 'Ginch', and I say 'Pete!', and he says 'Hi!' and I say 'Hi, what's on your feeble?', and he says 'Would you have any objections to a big write-up, a sensational spread, all about yourself in a national magazine?'

Certainly not I tell him, but if you'll excuse me very much . . . er, just what would the angle be . . . right now I mean . . . at this particular moment in world history?

Angle he snorts, angle. You don't realize who you are, Ginch . . . what you mean to people . . . bit of Americana . . . an army behind you Ginch . . . army behind you. . . Famous comic artist . . . now making with the serious oil paintings . . . is that an angle . . . is that the real Hamlet stuff? . . . man of moods . . . other side of the picture. . . Angle he says. . . Don't worry, I'll write it.

Okay I says, go ahead write it. Fine with me.

Fine he says. Now all I need now is just a couple facts . . . just bare facts . . . chronology stuff. . . Just dates. Where born . . . first job . . . mother's maiden name . . . just bare. . .

'Kay kid. Stop off tomorrow . . . maybe better this afternoo . . .

Love to cookie, love to he says, but right now I'm all barrelled up with a piece for *National Geographic* on bird life on a kumquat diet . . . pinned to the seat . . . deadline stuff. Tell you what . . . just put the dope on a sheet of paper . . . just dates . . . bare facts, no more than one, two three five six nine ten pages the most . . . so's I'll know where I'm going . . . and shoot it in the mail.

'Kay.

'Bye.

What is it, asks my wife and I tell her and drop the dope in the mail and the next day the phone rings, and it's him and he says:

Jeez!

Jeez what?

What's funny about that tripe?



I started belting the rat-trap.



What's supposed to be? You wanted just dates and facts.

I know, but . . .

But what . . .

Won't hurt to schmaltz it up a bit . . . guy like you . . . character in your time . . . you been around . . . newspaper stuff . . . colorful incidents . . . million laughs all them characters in your day . . . Hetty Green . . . Monk Eastman . . . John L. Sullivan . . . Old Doctor Grindle. Diamond Jim Bra . . .

How about Dred Scott, I suggest. Over him like a flying disc.

Funny things musta happened to you he says . . . big name people get big names . . . Poe, O'Henry—all those guys . . . they want big name people . . . and keep the gags funny . . . yells . . . not too broad mind you, but yet screamingly hilarious . . . boffos . . . from way down here. . . . You must have all kinds hilarious incidents. . . . Get busy. . . .

What is it asks my wife, and I tell her the guy wants hilarious incidents, and does she know of anything ever happened to me that was hilarious, and she says yes but better not put it in writing or we'll have to make a reservation for the first Rocket to the Moon. . . . Then she says wait a minute . . . why don't you put down about that time during the bridge game when that fine friend of yours . . . that bum that used to paint beautiful cherubs on Christmas cards . . . came racing through the apartment with his shirt tail out and his head full of blood screaming at his wife "Suzie, change the name on the letter-box!" . . .

and dived out the bathroom window. . . . Only hurry, dinner's in a half hour. . . .

So I start belting the rat-trap, and pretty soon there's an awful banging and I say what is it, and the wife says past midnight, and I ask her to slip me a bottle of beer and a sandwich like a sweetheart, and the phone rings and I say Grab it baby. . . .

Grab it baby she repeats with that Shick shaver edge to her voice . . . why should I grab it . . . it wouldn't be for me . . . not this time of night . . . some of your drunken pals bringing the pastry chef from the Looney's around to admire your hot paintings . . . and I begin to get a little hot myself and I says yeah it couldn't possibly be one of your relative pests from the East by any chance or some crud your sister met in a washroom in Canarsie and told to be sure to look us up. . . .

Well one word almost leads to a bridge lamp over the head, and pretty soon we're not talking, and sending notes to each other via the brats, and I drop the stuff in the mail and the phone rings and I grab it and it's him and he says

Cripes sakes, Ginch.

Cripes sakes what, I ask.

Trying to crucify me?

Didn't you get the stuff . . . the hilarious incidents? I shipped you six pounds of 'em. . . .

Stop being cute at your age will ya. . . . This piece is about a cartoonist. What good is a piece about a cartoonist without a couple of maybe six seven eight a dozen cartoons. . . . If I'm writing the piece, the



So we get cameras and tripods. . . .

least you can do is co-operate with some cartoons. . . .

Okay, I says, I'll dig you up a couple of oldies.

Oldies he shrieks. . . . Oldies! Trying to hang me, Ginch? . . . giving these people old cartoons. . . . Trouble with you Ginch is you're getting smug. Now get hot . . . make a couple new cartoons—funny—socko—zoompf! . . . drop 'em in the . . . no, better send 'em special messenger.

So I grind out a couple gagaroos and phone for a messenger myself because my wife is down at the Springs still mad, and the phone rings and I grab it and it's him yelling:

Well you sure turned out to be a fine heel, Ginch.

But I sent you the cartoons —

So this piece also happens to be about oil paintings, too —

Listen peapack if you expect me to paint you any oil pai . . .

Nonnnnnnnnnnonononoooo NO! . . . Just photos of 'em . . . the ones you already got painted . . .

Look stupe. I tell him Do you happen to know that those things cost ten bucks apiece . . .

Whatsamatter with you Ginch. . . . Use a little ingenuity, willya. Trouble with you Ginch is you been up on that hill too long. Ten bucks! You got kids ain't you? They got a camera, ain't they . . .

Now look . . .

Turned rat, eh Ginch? . . . Gonna let us all down . . . izzatit? I got an awful lot invested in this thing Ginch. . . . Now get . . .

With that the door opens and it's the wife back

from her mad, with the kids, and we get a lot of color chrome film, photo flood lamps, step ladders, rip the ironing board apart for a tripod . . . some sheets to cover the piano . . . wash boiler tops for reflectors . . . extra fuses, electric cable . . . and we burn the house down. The wife goes back, only this time it's Reno and the phone rings and it's him.

Ducking me eh Ginch?

Look, I explain. . . . It takes longer to get to the phone now that I'm living in the garage. . . . Now about those photos . . .

You got the wrong idea on this whole thing, Ginch.

But we started to take photogra . . .

I'm talking about the article Ginch . . . the piece itself, the words the text. . . .

What about the text?

'Way overboard . . . top-heavy . . . wrong slant . . . windy . . . wanders . . . no bing-bing . . . no zoompf . . . too esoteric . . . don't move. . . . Now look, never mind the drawings, the pictures, the photos, the text so far . . . we'll throw all that out. . . . What they want is the thing boiled down to a good fast two hundred words tops . . . but with everything in it including . . .

Say who in the hell IS this National Magazine anyway?

Who IS it? Could be any one of 'em. Could be *Life*, *Time*, *Fortune*, *Collier's*, the *Post*, *Look*, *Pic*, *Readers' Digest* . . . any place my agent can peddle it . . . and while you're at it Ginch . . . think of a title, will ya. . . .



Takes longer since I'm living in the garage.



## SWG GROUP INSURANCE

As the March issue of *The Screen Writer* goes to press, almost 200 members of the Screen Writers' Guild have sent in their applications and checks for participation in the Group Insurance Plan offered to us by the National Casualty Company. As soon as we have a total of 425 applications, or one-half the active membership of the Screen Writers' Guild, the Group Insurance Plan goes into effect.

Last week I discussed group insurance with a screen writer. He was interested but not enthusiastic. The following morning he was rushed to the hospital . . . but without hospital insurance and without the right to receive the \$200 a month benefit which will be available to screen writers who cannot work because of illness. I hope there will never again be need to use the odious phrase, "I told you so."

This excellent and inexpensive plan is available to every active member of the Screen Writers' Guild regardless of whether he is under contract to a studio, on a flat deal assignment or not working at all. All you have to do to become insured is send in your application and check.

This particular insurance plan which the Guild has been seeking for its members was approved unanimously by the 21 members of the Executive Board. It is going to save some of our members a lot of grief when illness strikes. For your own sake and for the sake of your family join with your Screen Writers' Guild fellow members in this cooperative venture. It costs little and can save you a lot. If you have lost your application or have any questions, call George Quigley at the Screen Writers' Guild.

IRVING STONE, Chairman  
Group Insurance Committee  
ERNA LAZARUS  
MANNY SEFF

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# Swell Guy

RICHARD BROOKS

*RICHARD BROOKS wrote Swell Guy and Brute Force, two of Mark Hellinger's most distinguished pictures. Brooks is equally well-known as a novelist — his The Brick Foxhole became Crossfire; and his new novel The Boiling Point has just been published.*

IT was a hot day. Wednesday, the funeral day. A small crowd of gawpers stood outside the Hollywood branch of the Pierce Brothers Mortuaries. It was something like the premiere of a movie: the fans, stars, photographers, the large sleek cars, the fame-hungry faces devouring the world-famous faces.

Inside the chapel it was cool and quiet. The walls and the small stage were banked with flowers. Sonorous organ music seeped out from somewhere.

In an impressive casket, behind a pane of glass, lay Mark Hellinger.

His friends, silent, awed, scared, sat lump-like in their seats waiting for the service to begin.

Extra chairs were placed in the aisle; Mark, it appeared, had a lot of friends.

Early Sunday morning he had died. By Sunday afternoon almost every "important" doctor had received an emergency call from his "important" motion picture patients.

"Check me over, Doc."

"Am I okay, Doc?"

"Well, look at Hellinger. He thought he was okay too. But look. Dead. Keeled over. An hour later, bam. Dead. Well, look again, Doc. Look good."

"Last week Lubitsch, today Hellinger. Who's next week? It comes in threes. It always comes in threes. Jesus, Doc. Make sure, will you?"

By evening radio columnists had told the world their friend, Mark, was dead.

Here it was Wednesday and time for his friends to mourn.

I sat in the chapel, dry-eyed, unable to summon tears, wondering who the dead man was, what he represented, what he left behind him, what his life had meant.

For the last few days people had stopped me, shaken their heads sadly, clucked their tongues, sighed and

asked: "You knew him, worked with him. What was he like?"

How could I answer? Can you sum up a man's life in a few words?

"A swell guy, huh?" they insisted.

"A big tipper, they say."

"Made some wonderful movies, didn't he?"

"Did he really drink as much as they say?"

"How 'bout that column of his? Did he really write all of 'em himself?"

And, finally, the question they all asked, after the pietistic formalities were out of the way: "How's this affect your contract with him?"

My contract with him had always been a handshake. A handshake to most people, it seems, is only valid as long as you live, and in most cases not that long.

WHEN I first met Mark (in the summer of 1945) he was worried. He was worried and apprehensive till the day he died. A new Producer's contract was pending. He was worried about it. His deal with Warners' hadn't worked out. Neither had the one with Twentieth Century-Fox. People were saying he was through.

We sat on a balcony that ran around one side of his home. Below was his swimming pool. Beyond that stretched several acres of his property. In the background, like a painted cyclorama, stretched Hollywood.

"It's funny," he said. "I've got a job writing a column once a week. A grand a column. Fifty grand a year. This house is mine. Don't owe a nickel on it. My wife's one of the world's most beautiful dames." He looked down at the swimming pool, where his two adopted children were playing. He watched them for a moment. Then he continued. "Credits? Some good, some bad. Mostly good. I know more about making



pictures now that I ever knew. Right now I'm *really* worth the money I've been getting. But they're ready to say I'm through. Jesus."

We went into his walnut-walled bar. He never let my glass get dry. He told me a hundred anecdotes and a few of his plans. Writers were an important part of his plans.

"Unless you've got it in the script, you haven't got it at all," he said. "What was your last salary?" I told him. "We'll double that, and I'll give you a piece of my piece of the picture. A writer ought to have a piece of the picture," he said. "Bad writers don't deserve even a byline. Good ones earn everything they can get their mitts on."

With each succeeding drink Mark began to appear sweller and sweller. Mrs. Hellinger came down to the bar. She closed a set of doors behind her and shut out a good deal of the sunlight. We were in a soft gloom. She turned on a carefully-shaded lamp.

The guys on Broadway would call her a Beautiful Blonde Type. Actually she was not nearly so robust as that sounded. She was tall and her hair was light and her skin was delicate and her body seemed to be well-manicured. In the semi-darkness she seemed as beautiful as Ziegfeld's Gladys Glad. Now that I think of it: I never saw her in the daylight . . . not even at the funeral.

"Fix me one, honey," she said in a low unmusical voice.

He fixed her one and introduced us. She smiled at me mirthlessly and started asking Mark questions about the dinner arrangements. There also seemed to be something wrong with the Upstairs Maid.

Mark set her drink on the bar.

"We're talking business, darling," he said.

She understood. She picked up her drink.

"My back hurts again," she said into her glass.

"What'd the doctor say?" he asked patiently.

"Same thing."

She nodded to me and left the room. There was a long silence after she left. He filled my glass again and poured another for himself.

"Married?" he asked.

"Yes."

Silence.

"How long?"

"Couple years," I said.

"First time?"

"No."

He nodded his head solemnly.

"Cheat on the side?" he asked gently.

"Not yet."

"Uh-huh," he said.

He took off his shirt and I noticed a large St. Christopher's Medallion hanging around his neck. It was a duplicate of the one Mrs. Hellinger wore.

"I get a rubdown every Sunday," he explained. "Rubber'll be here any minute." He ran his hands over the slight bulge below the belt. "I pick up weight too easy," he said.

He opened the doors and let the sunlight in.

"You think we can get a good picture out of this play, huh?" he asked.

"Maybe."

He sighed. "It's tough to find somebody who thinks the same way. Tough. You think we do?"

"About this picture, yes."

"Listen. I don't give a goddam about your politics. Only your work. Understand?"

He put out his hand. We shook hands.

"Deal?" he said.

"Deal."

I got up to go. He quickly filled my glass again. I already was tight. I wondered why the drink didn't seem to affect him.

"Only don't ever cross me," he said intensely. I didn't know what to say. I hadn't the slightest idea how I could ever be in a position to cross him. "We'll keep this deal between the two of us, huh?" he said. "And our setup. Keep that to yourself, too."

That's how I went to work for Mark Hellinger. No contract, no written terms. Only his word and a handshake; he never went back on either. And when, three weeks later his deal was set and I reported for work, I discovered I had been on salary since my first talk with him.

MARK lived in two distinct demi-worlds. In one world, he was secretive, suspicious, frantic, fearful. It was a world occupied by jealous, greedy punks who were constantly trying to find a way to destroy him. Big executives were, he often complained, con-ning against him, pulling off secret deals against him, planning to push him out of the movie business. Somebody or other was trying to grab all the glory away from him, make him appear a fool. He greeted each day as though catastrophe were about to befall him. If an admirer paid him a compliment there was bound to be a catch to it. The admirer was angling for something. He was a phony, a liar, a jerko-Charlie who thought he could muscle in on an easy touch. If Mark expected a compliment and didn't get it, it was just

## THE SCREEN WRITER

as bad. He accused the man of being tactless, rude, envious.

His business deals, his life at home, what he said to his friends, the background of his parents, money matters, things political or religious or social, he kept to himself, except for occasional pained hints.

His other world shone in the bright glare of a publicity spotlight.

The walls of his office were hung with his professional history. Pictures, scores of them, all framed alike, covered almost every inch of space. There were numerous photos: a movie star, a boxing champ, a famous writer, a notorious Mayor, all shaking hands with Mark, an arm around his shoulder, and an inscription at a corner of the photo "with love to a great guy, from . . ."

There was a photo of Mark as a boy of twenty, when he first went to work for the *New York Daily News* as a columnist. There was another of Mark in his Overseas Correspondent's uniform taken before he went to cover the Pacific war (1942) for *International News Service*. A framed letter from W. R. (Hearst) congratulating Mark for his newspaper work.

I asked him why he kept those pictures on the wall. "They're my friends," he said, surprised that anyone would even ask such a question. Then he frowned. "Sure, they are," he said slowly. "They like me. They're my kind of people."

He seemed desperately in need of friendship and love. Whenever he heard someone had spoken well of him, written about him with respect and admiration, he became misty-eyed.

His dislikes were quick and violent. His friendships were the same way. His respect for talent was unshakable.

"It's funny," he once said. "I guess I've written maybe six thousand short stories and a lot of other stuff. But I know I'm not a really good writer. That's the one thing I'd like to be more than anything else in the world, I guess. A great writer."

He thought Albert Maltz was an honest writer and an honest human being.

"If Albert's a Red," Mark told me, "then I'm not afraid of Communism."

At another time, when his spirits were dragging, he pleaded: "What do they (Communists) want? Just tell me what they want." He mentioned a few names. "They're all making more'n a grand a week. They hardly ever pick up a dinner check. They're miserly. They save every nickel for their own use. During the strike I saw 'em walk through the picket lines. They don't talk straight. They say one thing and they mean something else."

"Would you make an anti-communist movie?" I asked.

"No. Know why? I don't trust the people who go to movies. To make a picture against Communism you'd first have to explain what Communism is. As soon as you'd do that, half the punks who go to movies would want to join the Communist party. I know something about the people who go to movies all right. They're joiners. They want to be heroes. It doesn't make a helluva lot of difference what kind of a hero, cop, hoodlum, Nazi, Communist, but a hero."

"You don't have much faith in the people?"

"Faith?"

"In their common sense."

"No. They're a mob. I'm afraid of mobs. I hate 'em. I want them to like me, but I don't like them."

HE was extremely proud of his picture *The Killers*. In producing this Ernest Hemingway short story, Mark felt he had fulfilled himself. It was his kind of story made his way. He was in a position to take all the credit for himself. That he didn't is a tribute to his sense of fair play and justice. He gave credit to Jerry Wald, who brought the idea to him in the first place. He was unreserved in his praise of Anthony Veiller, who wrote the screenplay, and of Robert Siodmak, who directed.

"Wald's got more ideas a minute than the rest of the picture-makers in a month," he said. "He deserves the Thalberg Award this year (1946) but won't get it. Why?" He shrugged. "Jealousy, I guess."

When he spoke of John Huston, he used only superlatives. He believed Huston to be "a great talent," one of the few men in Hollywood who knew how to make a fine movie.

During the morning, over lunch, in the afternoon hours, he usually would be in good spirits. He would grin mysteriously and speak of his many friends and acquaintances. He prided himself on knowing intimately many underworld characters. He respected their confidences. At the same time he was friendly with the F.B.I. He could greet one side of the law with his left hand and the other with his right, and neither knew what the other was doing. During the daytime hours (at the office) he was gay and witty and hopeful.

Then, as it would begin to grow dark, as the sunlight would edge out of the room, he would slowly become depressed, nervous, irritable, unpredictable.

He would begin to phone his close friends, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, or, when they were in town, Ann Sheridan and Steve Hannegan, or Jimmy Kern. If they were busy that evening, he would become suspicious



of their friendship. He was as jealous of his friends as a married woman of a secret lover.

He was constantly trying to find out if his friends still loved him, whether they were faithful to him. Those who worked with him quickly came to know that their relationship with Mark was not merely a business association. It seemed to be impossible for Mark not to become emotionally involved with those he liked or respected.

He lavished gifts, money and attention on his friends. In return he expected only their love and fidelity. If Mark disliked someone and you did not dislike him, too, then you were betraying him. He often predicted calamity for those who left him to work for someone else.

I knew of one case where he hated a man with a particularly vocal venom. He told me he had been "crossed" by this man, that some day he would square accounts with him. I was in Mark's office one afternoon when this man called on him. The man was contrite. He begged Mark to forgive him. He said he was broke, that his wife had left him. He began to cry. Mark, overwhelmed by the man's tears, burst into tears himself. I don't know whether it was the man's personal tragedy that touched Mark, or the man's unashamed confessional. He gave the man a new stake, got him together with his wife again, and obtained a job for him.

"Wait and see," Mark said afterwards. "In a month he'll cross me again."

Mark told me of another case. A writer came to him in the hope of a job. There was no position open. However, Mark gave the man a weekly sum and told him to write a book. Did the man have an idea for a book? Yes. An idea that had been germinating for years. Mark told him to go and write it. He would send the man a check every week for a year. Mark expected to hold no options on the book, expected no return for his money. Away went the man. In eight months the book was finished. The writer sent the book off to various publishers. No house would undertake publication. However, one publisher did send the manuscript to Mark (to whom it was dedicated).

The manuscript was a violent diatribe against Jews in Hollywood.

Mark sent the manuscript to the author with a last final check. A note was attached: "Not because of what you wrote but because even a no-talent bastard has to eat."

The snap ending to this incident of a Jew unknowingly supporting a writer to write an anti-Semitic harangue was a source of amusement to Mark.

As a matter of fact he was constantly trying to fit

life into a pattern of snap endings. If somebody was bad, he might somehow turn up doing something good. A saint, on the other hand, might turn out to be an unholy terror.

FROM the very first picture he produced independently, Mark was successful, both commercially and critically. He made a lot of money and spent a lot. He was never afraid that he would not make more. His future in the film business was reasonably certain when his latest deal with Selznick was consummated. In spite of this, in spite of the money he had made and the fame he had reached, Mark was insecure and frightened. He drove himself day and night to bolster his position. He felt that the slightest carelessness or lack of interest might wipe him into oblivion.

"Suppose you could be guaranteed a yearly wage by some studio and they'd let you make the kind of pictures you want," I asked, "would you feel safe?"

"I wouldn't take it."

"Why?"

"I gotta do it myself. I don't want to take orders from anybody, anybody. I've got my self respect. I'll show 'em, all of 'em."

It seemed he was always getting even with something that had been done to him. Perhaps this driving purpose and limitless energy enabled him to become the sort of success he believed he wanted to be.

By the time he died he had amassed several filing cabinets relating his successes and personal exploits. How many more clippings it would have taken to satisfy him that he was "successful" I don't know. His walls were proof that "Important" people thought highly of him and loved him. Yet, he constantly questioned their love and had to hear again and again that they respected him.

Mark hated the Hollywood Jungle and yet he loved it, too. He had accustomed himself to the kind of jungle fighting that is required for success here and he prided himself on his skill and talent in coming out on top.

I'm not sure what it was that he was trying to live down, but I do know that his goals were good ones, that his objectives in life were worthwhile, that he was more human than he was a "successful producer."

It seems to me that Mark Hellinger was a sort of Hemingway hero: hard-boiled, colorful, sometimes bewildered, extremely sentimental, easy to laugh and easy to cry, generous, vengeful and forgiving, hungry for the full life, and in the end being cheated by what he wanted most.

The organ music ended. Most of the mourners had

become hypnotized by the drawn-out chords, the casket on the stage, and the knowledge that within it lay a man who only a few days ago had been as alive as the rest of us.

A woman began to sob. She rose and hurried outside the chapel to control her tears. She was a close friend of Mark's. Her tears started others crying.

An austere Rector of the High Episcopal faith came out onto the stage and began to deliver a prayer. As he talked, the mourners became fidgety and dry-eyed. This religious man was not talking about the Mark Hellinger we knew. Somehow this was not the prayer with which to dispatch Mark. The sendoff was out of key.

Mark's religion was more human than these strung-together words.

Perhaps a Jewish funeral service for Mark would have been false. But this one was false, too.

The Rector made a cross over Mark's casket and, with an admonition that only believers in Christ could enter heaven, ended the service.

There was a kind of surprised shock in most eyes. Disappointment, too. Mark was a Christian, not by

church, but because of his relations with other men.

A number of mourners filed up on stage to take a last look at Mark behind the thick glass.

"He doesn't look like Mark," most of them said.

I went outside into the dazzling sunlight. I felt better because the service had taken place in daytime.

"They should've had a few bottles of brandy around," said someone. "That's the way Mark would've wanted it."

"Yeah. Somebody should've told some jokes or something. This wasn't like Mark."

"Or stories. The way Mark told them."

"I wished I could've cried," said someone else.

The crowd was still outside looking for famous "successful" faces.

I walked away subdued, disappointed, cheated.

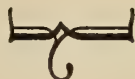
They were going to ship Mark back to New York to be buried.

I hope he wasn't scared.

I was.

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## Screen Writers' Guild Studio Chairmen

(February 20, 1948)

Columbia—Louella MacFarlane; alternate, Edward Huebsch.

MGM—Anne Chapin; alternate, Sonya Levien; Joseph Ansen, Robert Nathan, and George Wells, Studio Committee.

Paramount — Theodore Strauss; alternate, Richard Breen.

Republic—Sloan Nibley; alternate, Patrick Ford.

RKO—Daniel Mainwaring; alternate, Martin Rackin.

20th Century-Fox — Richard Murphy; alternate, Wanda Tuchock.

Universal-International—D. D. Beauchamp.

Warners—James Webb; alternate, Edmund North.



# An Education in Educational Films

ARTHUR L. MAYER

*ARTHUR L. MAYER, a theatre man for many years, is perhaps best known for his operation of the Rialto in New York. He has imported many outstanding foreign films including the memorable Open City. For war services, as Assistant to the Chairman of the American Red Cross, he was decorated by the President, with the Medal of Merit.*

**M**Y education in educational films started unexpectedly three years ago when I was in Burma. The Stillwell Road had been completed in the face of almost incredible obstacles, and the only serious danger that remained was the prevalence of malarial mosquitoes. To instruct the natives in the elementary precautions to be taken against the disease, we made up some film slides greatly magnifying the size of the mosquito so as to clearly illustrate the means by which the deadly germ was carried. To my dismay, at the first showing of the film, the audience burst into paroxysms of laughter. I asked the Chinese lad seated next to me the cause of the merriment. "In America," he said, "maybe you have great big mosquitoes like elephants and they must be dangerous. But here we have teeny bitsy ones which only give you a little itch."

It is possible to exaggerate the size of a malarial mosquito but I cannot overstate the profound uneasiness which arose from four years of intimate association with thousands of American GI's. The world has never seen a more lovable group of young men, gallant, gay, generous, and ingenious. But along with these virtues, were their ignorance, intolerance and indifference. Suddenly catapulted into exciting ancient cultures such as those of China, India, Italy and Egypt, nowhere did more than a minute percentage indicate the faintest awareness of the mystery and miracle of their new surroundings. Nothing in their previous education had conditioned them to be interested in the history, the customs, the religions or the ideals of the people among whom they were stationed. They dismissed them as

dirty, untruthful and dishonest. They measured civilization in terms of motor power, and human dignity on the basis of sanitary installations. I saw the warmth of our original welcome in all these countries fade to hostility as a consequence of our boorishness, prejudices and even arrogance. It seemed to me, and still seems to me, that the peace of the world is threatened not solely by the dark suspicions and fanatic ideologies of our totalitarian enemies, but also by the complete failure of American education to inculcate in our youth broad human interests and sympathies. Bigotry and the myth of racial supremacy are unfortunately not confined exclusively to nazis and communists.

I vowed that if I ever got back home I would try to lead a better and more useful life. I would seek to atone for all the bad pictures I had made and shown to adults, by producing some for children, that would broaden their horizons and make them more fully aware of the common needs and aspirations of all people. For this colossal task my equipment was pitifully meager. I knew little about modern educational procedure and less about modern educational thought. I had been a picture exhibitor, importer and producer all my life. I had played a pigmy part in the gigantic task of creating films for the Army, which served with vast success to train young men for the job of killing. I was convinced that we could use pictures equally effectively to train youngsters for the job of living. We would show them the Seven Seas as links binding rather than dividing the world; the Polar regions, not as vast frozen wastes, but as the heavenly highways of the future; the islands of the

## THE SCREEN WRITER

Pacific, not as tropical paradises inhabited by irresistible sarong-clad sirens, but as strategic stepping stones between East and West. I wanted to make pictures for our children while their minds were still sensitive and tender, about the children of other countries equally tender and sensitive, going to school for the first time, wearing shoes for the first time, celebrating their religious ceremonies that are the equivalent of our Christmas. I wanted to show our young people the people of all lands seeking to satisfy what all men need of food, clothing and shelter, healing the sick, rearing their offspring, working in fields and shops, developing institutions of government, expressing in color, line and dance their love of the beauty of nature, God and man.

**I**N spite of my long years in the motion picture industry, I am, comparatively speaking, a man of my word. Promptly upon my return to the United States two years ago, I proceeded to screen some 600 so-called educational pictures. For many years I have spent a large part of my time looking at Hollywood B product. Indeed, I am frequently referred to in movie circles as the greatest living authority on bad motion pictures. I had considered these B's about the lowest form of human life. To my amazement, however, it seemed that a large percentage of the teaching films that I screened had been made by men of an even lower grade of intelligence than those who turned out the murder, mystery and menace films in which I have specialized. Many of the teaching films seemed to me little more than illustrated lectures. Many seemed to be on subjects which could be taught just as well by traditional methods. Many seemed to rely too greatly on live action and too little on the infinite capacity of animation to visualize the invisible and animate the inanimate. Many, to my limited intelligence at any rate, seemed to cover so large a range of ideas or so wide a segment of human experience as to be confusing rather than enlightening. Few of them seemed to me to take advantage of the particular talent of the film for converting the abstract into concrete unforgettable images. None of them seemed to me to be made by showmen with the gift of making the acquisition of knowledge an exciting and dramatic adventure.

Since then, experience has made me vastly more charitable. I have tried to make educational pictures myself and discovered to my cost, the discouragements incurred in simultaneously seeking to satisfy prominent academic authorities, associations of teachers, subject matter experts, visual education directors, script writers and motion picture technicians. Frequently, I felt like

an equestrian performer trying to ride a half-dozen unbridled horses simultaneously and inevitably, sooner or later, falling down between them. I have also become better acquainted with the economic status of the industry and discovered that educational pictures today are not made by morons, unless they are morons to be in the business, but by entrepreneurs understandably eager to secure some small profit on their investment of time and money. Only rarely does any picture attain a sale of 400 prints in a year. Most subjects sell far fewer. The average selling price, less the cost of merchandising for a one reel film, is \$30.00. In other words, the gross return on a highly successful one reel picture is approximately \$12,000, and ordinarily far less. Deducting overhead, depreciation and other inevitable operating expenses, it is obvious that a man who makes educational pictures consistently budgeted over \$8,000 a reel is going to end up in the red at the end of the year. But nobody, however gifted or industrious, who makes pictures costing \$8,000 or less, is going to turn out films that will give stature and standing to motion pictures in American education.

The funds for our enterprise were contributed by the Motion Picture Association. For a considerable number of years, indeed since 1936, the Association has been engaged in various cooperative educational projects with organizations such as the American Council on Education, and has spent several hundred thousand dollars in seeking to test existing visual aids in the schools to ascertain a basis for designing new films of greater merit. It has prepared treatments for several hundred proposed films and has organized its own subsidiary, Teaching Films Custodians, to reassemble and distribute excerpts from theatrical pictures which touched on vital problems in human relations. These and many other activities, indicate the deep interest of the Association in educational pictures, an interest which was so encouraging that at one stage in the proceedings we even dared to dream of a \$10,000,000 foundation to promote cheaper projectors, improved classroom facilities, more widespread training of teachers in the use of films and a steady flow of pictures created by educators and movie makers working in close coordination.

Actually, however, we wound up with an appropriation from the Association of \$100,000 which was later reduced to \$75,000. By this standard you may measure the vast chasm between my educational aspirations and my educational achievements to date! For another yawning gulf between promise and performance I was not responsible. When I returned from a trip to Germany a year and a half ago, I was genuinely shocked to read releases in the newspapers speaking of the proposed production of "model films," and



statements that "a new standard for producers of classroom films was about to be established." No such wild claims were in my mind or those of the Association representatives with whom I dealt. The project was first referred to at our meetings by the modest title of "sample films." This was later changed to the innocuous if lugubrious soubriquet of Pilot Films. "Model films" was a press representative's pipe dream.

Otherwise our arrangement was simple and unmarred by misunderstanding. I contributed my time; the Association, as a public relations gesture, contributed its money and did not seek in any way to influence the enterprise. Our joint purpose was to produce five or six pictures at a reasonable cost, to ascertain what if anything, the movie industry had to offer in the field of teaching films. It was understood from the outset, that the teaching effectiveness of the films produced must be demonstrated by classroom tests before they were released and that a reasonable amount of the appropriation should be held in reserve to make whatever changes these tests proved desirable. Such tests were instituted in New Haven late last spring under the auspices of Dr. Mark May of Yale University and have been renewed this fall on the three pictures produced to date.

I also turned for cooperation and enlightenment to a group of textbook publishers associated in an enterprise known as the Teaching Films Survey. They were in a strategic position to be well aware of educational bottlenecks where teaching films could successfully be used as a substitute for traditional methods. They had a specialized knowledge of subject matter, of competent available authors and of the needs and viewpoints of school superintendents and principals, with a capacity to corral the authors and correlate the films with those needs and viewpoints. In addition, their advice on marketing procedures and their capacity to prepare brochures on the films we proposed to produce, all seemed to point to them as particularly desirable associates in an educational film project—and such they proved to be.

Under the procedure which we adopted, representatives of the Commission on Motion Pictures worked with the publishers' experts in selecting the subjects which they considered the most desirable, the age level to which the subject should be addressed and the objectives of each picture. After the objectives had been agreed upon, a production outline was prepared showing the nature of the teaching problem, a description of the audience for whom the film was intended, and a list of the facts which the film was supposed to teach. Next, the subject was assigned to one of the

textbook publishers whose firm had a particular competency to deal with it and they selected a subject matter expert to write a basic memorandum. This memo was submitted to the Commission for checking with key people in the educational field. This was followed by a reconciliation of divergent views between the author of the memo and the advisory consultants. After this reconciliation was effected, the treatment agreed upon was turned over to a script writer who proceeded to whip the material into script form. This, of course, again had to be the subject of further communications and conferences attended by teaching specialists in the subject matter field, directors of visual education as well as those actively engaged on the film such as the script writer, the producer and myself. If and when we agreed on the final script, I had to then battle out with the producer the painful detail of cost, and when these proved too high, to chisel with the experts for eliminations.

We had hoped to make the pictures in the major company studios but financial obstacles proved insuperable and the three pictures thus far produced were all turned out by independent documentary producers; *Subtraction*, by John Grierson's organization, The World Today; *Osmosis* by Affiliated Film Producers consisting of Van Dyke Jacoby, Rodakiewicz and Ferno, the men who made the distinguished OWI Overseas films; and *The Seasons* by Film Graphics, composed of two fugitives from the Disney Studio. None of the three films are entirely satisfactory, as Dr. May's tests are demonstrating, if indeed it were not already obvious to their realistic-minded producers. If remade tomorrow, they could in many ways be improved, but the one thing we could not do would be to reduce their cost. *Subtraction*, running a reel and a half, cost approximately \$16,000; *Osmosis*, two reels, \$22,000; *The Seasons*, two reels in color, \$20,000. A fourth proposed film on Roger Williams and Religious Tolerance, was projected and a script prepared by Leonard Spigelgass. It required, however, competent actors, sets and costumes and has not as yet been produced because we could find no major producer prepared to make it for less than \$60,000. Warner Brothers, for instance, was confident they could make it a memorable film for that amount, but however memorable, so costly a picture would have little bearing on solving the immediate practical problem that confronts all who are interested in the financial as well as the technical aspects of producing teaching films. None of the films I have mentioned paid any remuneration for the services of educational advisors or picture technicians. If such costs had been added, the pictures would, of course, have been substantially more expensive.

THE production schedule I have described may have sounded arduous. It certainly was. There were, for instance, not less than five *Seasons* scripts prepared and fully fifty people were consulted in the making of the film. It took five months from the draft of the first script to the approval of the last one, and then another two months before the picture itself was completed. Obviously, no commercial enterprise, seeking to function on a profit basis, with a steady flow of product, could operate in such a fashion. Moreover, too many highly articulate advisers frequently become a liability rather than an asset. The more each knows, the more he contributes additional ideas whose inclusion in the picture appear essential to him. Too many cooks may not spoil the broth, but they can add so many ingredients that it curdles.

While the pictures were in the making, the publishers were conducting a survey to determine the present and prospective use of films in schools, the fields and subjects on which they were most desired, and the strength and weakness of the films produced to date. Over 7,000 questionnaires were distributed and collected by textbook salesmen from superintendents, principals, visual education directors and teachers in the 501 largest school systems of the country. A report on this survey, prepared by a highly competent research worker and statistician, Carroll Belknap, was completed a few months ago, and a report on this report will shortly be published by the Teaching Films Survey. This is cause for rejoicing for the Belknap report seems to me the first genuinely educational material as yet collated on educational pictures, an invaluable antidote to years of boundless enthusiasm based on abysmal ignorance.

This enthusiasm, though it generated considerable early interest in educational circles in the use of teaching films, has proved a boomerang. Oversold teachers were discouraged to find that films did not produce the automatic miracles that zealots had led them to anticipate. Actually, for a conscientious teacher, films do not make teaching easier. They may impart information more excitingly and more permanently, but they constitute no short-cut to the royal road to knowledge. If anything, they impose increased demands on the time and the capacity of instructors.

Nor is enthusiasm over the possibilities of the medium sufficient. Adequate training is equally necessary. Such training is supplied by teachers colleges at the present time in a haphazard fashion. Of all the VE courses described in the catalogues submitted to the Teaching Film Survey, Belknap found only seven dealing specifically with the use of films. The vast majority of school superintendents, principals and visual education directors comment unfavorably on the ability of teach-

ers to use films effectively. Many of them regard this weakness as the major handicap at the present time to the advancement of visual education. If this is so, it is surprising that the great majority of schools make so little effort to cure the situation with in-service courses.

UNDER these conditions, it is discouraging, but scarcely surprising, that although nationally speaking, approximately one-third of the teachers are greatly interested in the use of films, the percentage is far less than this where there are the most projectors and where pictures have been used the longest time. It is considerably higher where there are the fewest pictures and the least experience with teaching films. This situation cannot possibly be cured until there is a substantial increase in the number of satisfactory pictures dealing specifically with subject matter in the school curriculum. At the present time not only do the vast majority of Visual Education directors, principals and teachers find the pictures themselves inadequate, but they are hopelessly limited, particularly in the elementary schools, in securing productions that deal directly with specific topics.

For example, physical geography is one of the subjects for which films are mostly commonly used in the elementary schools as well as in the high schools. Actually, there are only about 30 sound motion pictures that concentrate on this subject that are featured in textbooks. Only four of these 30 films are generally rated as suitable for use in elementary schools. Yet far more than these 30 films are actually used in teaching this subject, both in elementary schools and in high schools.

The paucity of pictures leads to amazing tolerance in defining grade levels. The University of Illinois, for instance, is somewhat stricter than most film renting libraries, but it lists 119 titles as suitable for all grades from primary to Junior high school; 117 from intermediate to college; 441 from Junior high school through college. The use of films in schools is no indication either of satisfactory quality or availability, but of the determination and ingenuity with which a considerable number of teachers continue to seek to utilize subjects which have only a vague or partial relationship to the curriculum and age of the students.

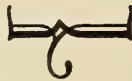
In the meantime, there continues to be substantial advance in the installation of projectors in schools. By 1951 there should be approximately 30,000 projectors available for teaching. This represents progress, but on the other hand it is disheartening when you compare our expenditures for education for peace with those for education for fighting. During the war the Army alone, it is claimed, purchased 61,000 projectors.



With the exception of Encyclopedia Britannica Films, which produces approximately 50% of the most popular subjects, and one or two other moderately well established organizations, the bulk of teaching films have come from shoe-string production by small units, from the by-products of entertainment pictures, from the sponsored production by industry, philanthropic institutions and government agencies, and in the last year or two from "angeled" production financed by someone who has been cajoled into putting up the necessary funds. The day of the angels is now coming to an end, with the day of the devils about to set in. By the devils I mean, more or less facetiously, my good friends the major film producing companies. United World, a Universal subsidiary, has already announced its entry into the educational field. Warner Brothers and R.K.O. are only restrained by temporary worry over the loss of the British entertainment film market. These gentlemen are as well equipped with funds as they are lacking in knowledge. Once they enter the educational field they will not falter as did their predecessors because of lack of cash or confidence. For a considerable length of time they will not teach the

children much, but they will learn greatly themselves. It may, indeed, prove one of the greatest educational projects in history—the education of the movie makers.

I, myself, would have greatly preferred a few years of further experimentation under the auspices of one of the educational foundations or of the Motion Picture Association. In this way we could have established a sounder foundation for progress and avoided many errors for which not only our innocent producers, but what is far more important, our innocent progeny will pay. We are, however, as a nation, apparently dedicated not to deviate from the free enterprise system, even where, as in the field of education, it may prove far from free but highly costly to all concerned. Make no mistake, however, we will eventually have good teaching films and plenty of them. They will be used in every electrically equipped school in the country, not replacing textbooks or classroom instruction, but in close conjunction with them. We will learn to do these things, but we will learn them the hard way. Maybe, if my own experience is a reliable guide, it is the only way in which uneducated people can learn to be educators.



# Cops and Writers

MALVIN WALD

*SWG member MALVIN WALD was sent by Mark Hellinger to New York to obtain background material for The Naked City on which he shared screenplay credit with Albert Maltz.*

**L**AST year I approached a producer with an idea for a picture. The producer had been a famed Broadway columnist and knew life in New York City as no one else did.

The idea was a simple one: it had occurred to me that in film stories the police usually sat around doing nothing until Dick Powell or Humphrey Bogart, functioning as private eyes, came through with enough brilliant deductions to solve the case. I was certain the police did a great deal more than that and I wanted to write a picture about it.

I asked the producer, who had been familiar with many famous New York City murder cases just one thing, "How many of those cases were solved by private detectives?"

He thought this over carefully. "Come to think of it, pappy," he said, ". . . none of them. The police usually solved them."

"How about making a movie letting the public in on that great secret?" I suggested.

He thought it a good idea for an honest and realistic picture all down the line. He arranged with Mayor O'Dwyer and Police Commissioner Wallender for me to go to New York City and spend a month at Police Headquarters, learning everything I could about solving murders. The Police Commissioner instructed his top detectives to give me a thorough course in scientific crime deduction—with the accent on homicide.

**T**HE month spent with those New York City cops was most revealing

First, they did not greet me with open arms. I began to feel like a criminal as the various detectives eyed me with cold appraisal. They informed me in their own quiet way that they didn't harbor much affection for

screen writers—especially those who write murder mysteries.

Slowly they poured out their bitter complaints. In too many movies they were shown as lazy, stupid characters who wore derbies indoors and spoke out of the sides of their mouths.

They were portrayed as hopelessly inefficient buffoons and bunglers who couldn't find a sailor in a Navy Yard. In the films they were unable to solve even the simplest murder without the assistance of a handsome private eye and his blonde secretary. And this in the face of the fact that not a single murder had been solved by a private detective in New York in the last quarter-century.

"Look, friend," said one detective, "we don't look upon ourselves as heroes. We're just a bunch of hard-working civil servants who try to support our families on \$80 or \$90 a week. We've all put in plenty of time pounding beats as patrolmen and we earned our promotions to the rank of detectives."

"That's right," agreed a neatly-dressed lieutenant. "We're no glamor boys. But we solve most of our murders and arrest the killers. And we hope to retire on pensions while we're still young enough to do a little fishing and traveling."

"We don't mind you writer fellows exaggerating a little," added a middle-aged inspector with a touch of Irish brogue in his Brooklyn accent. "That's how you make your living. But when you start telling bald-faced lies about us—giving us no credit for the work we do day after day, year after year—then we're just a bit annoyed."

Their report of grievances suddenly switched to an informal cross-examination. No rubber hoses or bright lights. Just the names of a few current murder movies



they had seen and not liked—at all. I hadn't written any of the films they mentioned—but still I started to sweat.

Finally I admitted that perhaps many Hollywood producers and writers had gotten lost in the excitement of their stories and had been a little careless with the truth. However I assured them that I would do my best to write an honest film about men on the homicide squad.

"Okay," they said with a smile I'm sure they reserved for murderers discovered with smoking revolvers in their hands, "we'll take your word and teach you what we can. But we're willing to bet that when your story hits the screen, it will be just like the others."

SO I started making the rounds of all the bureaus and offices of the police department concerned with the subject of homicide. I read the voluminous files of the outstanding murder cases in recent New York history.

Some of these files contained as many as a thousand separate documents—reports from detectives, anonymous tips to the police, statements of dying men and letters from other law enforcement agencies.

I watched the police at work in the morning line-up and I interviewed the detectives from the homicide squad, which investigates all murders.

With two hundred assorted detectives, I attended a refresher course at the New York Police Academy at which leading experts gave hard-hitting, practical lectures on every aspect of crime.

I spent several uncomfortable hours at the city morgue watching the medical examiner and his assistants perform autopsies on recently-arrived corpses. According to New York laws, the medical examiner (a civil service employee, responsible only to the mayor) investigates all cases of persons who died by homicide, suicide, casualties, under suspicious circumstances or unattended by a physician or another person.

I sniffed lethal poisons in the test-tubes of the city toxicologists. I peered at bullets through the double-barrelled comparison microscopes of the ballistics experts. I examined the spectograph machine of the technical research laboratory.

At the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, I met the "silent detectives," the files of criminal records. These records included the fingerprint files and the rogues' gallery, where photographs of criminals are filed two ways—according to height and according to *modus operandi* (kind of crimes in which they specialize).

Pictures for the rogues gallery are taken in a photo gallery located in the basement of police headquarters,

right next to a row of jail cells. Business was slow the day I visited it. The over-anxious photographer was all set to have me pose for front and side views. But my detective-escort assured him that I really wasn't a criminal—just a Hollywood writer.

Everywhere I went, the news that I was a screen writer was received with a look of suspicion and a sniff of disapproval. Every expert I met had some fault to find with mystery movies and demanded to know why the writers didn't get their technical details straight.

Here then are a few tips they passed on to me. Some of them I used in the picture I was writing. The others are offered *gratis* with the hope that your producers will let you use them in your screenplays.

LET'S start with the New York Police Department's first connection with a murder. (The procedure may differ in other cities.) All calls about a homicide are received at a central telephone switchboard.

The operator at the switchboard immediately calls the following persons and directs them to the scene of the crime: detectives of the Homicide Squad; detectives of the nearest police precinct; the Medical Examiner's office; the Assistant District Attorney's office; the Bureau of Ballistics if a firearm was used; the Technical Research Laboratory; and if it is a heavy case, an inspector or even the Police Commissioner himself.

That may seem like a lot of people. But murder is a serious business and its solution is not a one-man affair. It requires teamwork and long arduous effort on the part of many specialists.

Upon arriving at the scene of the crime, detectives must wear their badges on an outside garment. The room is cleared of all unnecessary people. That includes newspaper men, wandering drunks and private eyes trying to solve the crime with the help of beautiful debutantes.

A stenographer is summoned and the detective on the case dictates to him a detailed and accurate description of the scene—the physical layout, the condition and appearance of the body, any weapons found, etc.

The detective cannot disturb any item in the room until the police photographer snaps the scene from several angles. Meanwhile the detective must draw a sketch of the scene of the crime for his own use in questioning witnesses and suspects.

The sketch should include such details as the position of the body, all important furniture, all entrances, exits, doors and windows. It should also show whether the lights were on or off, whether the windows were

up or down, and what kind of weather there was outside.

The detective must not fingerprint the victim of a shooting until the Medical Examiner (or Coroner in other cities) is through with the body. A shooting during a struggle may result in powder burns on the fingers. Fingerprinting may smudge those burns.

At the scene of the homicide, the ranking officer of detectives is in charge of the case. But the cause of death should not be determined by him, but by the Medical Examiner.

The detective should never touch the murder gun until the Ballistics man arrives. The Technical Research Lab man will take care of the clues, traces and fingerprint evidence.

The most common fault, which screen writers commit, is the manner in which their movie detectives pick up a murder gun.

In the average movie, the detective sees the weapon lying on the floor near the body. "Don't touch that gun," he says. "The finger prints on it will send the guilty man to the chair."

The cinema detective thereupon goes through an elaborate procedure. He removes a large handkerchief from his breast pocket and carefully wraps it around the gun. He puts the gun in his pocket and when he gets back to headquarters he drops it off with the fingerprint expert.

This may be a shock to followers of the handkerchief method—but all the handkerchief does is blur or remove any good prints from the weapon.

Incidentally, the New York police report that they haven't found a set of five good fingerprints on a gun in the last twenty years.

Fingerprints play an important part as clues in movies, yet their use is often incorrect. Because of the tremendous amount of fingerprints on file, a criminal can't be identified through a single print. Normally five prints are needed to identify an individual's characteristics.

Even though our film detectives think otherwise, fingerprints are seldom left clearly on any object except a glass or a bottle. When taking such articles away from the scene of the crime, detectives should never put them in an envelope or wrap them up. They should be carried in a loose, open box.

This is liable to cause a civil war among law enforcement agencies, but the greatest story point about fingerprints is contrary to fact. That is the myth of requesting fingerprint identification from the F.B.I. and receiving an answer overnight.

Because of the millions of fingerprints on file in Washington, it takes from a week to a month to get a response. But don't blame the F.B.I. Blame the Congress which cuts down their appropriations.

**T**O get back to that murder gun lying on the floor. A few writers do know better than to use handkerchiefs. Their detective-heroes extract a pencil from their pockets, insert the pencil in the barrel of the gun and lift it up that way.

That method is all right as far as fingerprints go. But it just about ruins the work of the ballistics expert. He'll never be able to figure out what kind of a bullet caused those strange new markings which the detective's pencil left in the barrel of the gun.

What then is the correct way to pick up a murder gun without spoiling the fingerprints or ballistic markings? The answer is strange but sensible. Simply loop a piece of string through the trigger, lift the gun up and nail it between two wooden boards for carrying purposes.

Where do you get boards, hammer and nails for that? The detective from the technical research laboratory brings them in his homicide kit.

This kit also contains such handy items as tape measures, rule measures, benzidine (to test for bloodstains), knives, tweezers, forceps, scissors, hack-saws, screwdrivers, pliers, chisels, files, test tubes, rubber gloves, flashlights, and gaseous iodine. The iodine, when sprayed through an atomizer, brings out latent fingerprints.

The technical research lab man can also bring along a portable ultra-violet ray lamp which can detect the contents of a suitcase without even opening it.

And back at his lab, the detective-scientist has an invaluable aid in the spectograph. This is an optical instrument which requires only a tiny amount of material to analyze any sort of matter on photographic plates. These photos can be introduced in court as evidence to identify pieces of dust, soil, metallic substances, hairs or threads which may be found on the clothes or shoes of a suspect.

An up-to-date police department like New York's makes use of the very latest scientific discoveries. Mine detectors, developed during the war, help locate buried guns, knives and bullets. The snooper-scope uses infrared light to enable a detective to spot a criminal in the dark.

Many writers have their criminals outwit the police by filing off gun and automobile engine numbers. But



today New York's police scientists can restore those numbers by using an etching acid to show up the compressed molecules of metals which have been stamped by the numbers.

The ballistics experts were very much perplexed by the colorful and inaccurate names given to guns by writers. "Why," demanded one ballistics man, "do those movie cops use terms like rod, cannon, roscow, gat and heater? Why don't they use the correct nomenclature? Only three types of concealed weapons are involved in murders—revolvers, pistols and automatics."

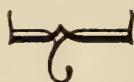
The average detective carries a .32 calibre Colt revolver containing six bullets. So, caution the gun experts, don't show a detective firing more than six times without reloading. Sure, it happens all the time

in Western pictures—but that still doesn't make it believable.

Those are just a few of the technical details that cops don't like about movies. But their objections to certain features of murder films are based on more than personal vanity.

In order to solve crimes, the police need the help of the public. And they can't expect too much cooperation if the movies keep telling the citizens that the police don't know how to solve the murder anyway.

So the appeal that the hardworking cops make today to the producers and screen writers is this—Please try to use the truth as a basis for your detective stories and characters. There's no reason the truth can't be more exciting than fiction.



## Gunn Shots

(Continued from Inside Front Cover)

serve admiration exclusively for pictures in which the heroine's seams are crooked and the hero has bags under his eyes. At the extreme, they want not only realism but bad lighting, and the hell with Gregg Toland. But the realists are a healthy influence, and they have an endearing sentimental inconsistency. They rhapsodize over the realistic dowdiness of English actresses, but their one complaint about *Great Expectations* was that Valerie Hobson was not sufficiently glamorous. They villify Hollywood for sentimentalizing and prettifying character, but when in *Golden Earrings* Marlene Dietrich showed up unwashed, unsavory, and by inference maybe lousy, all in legitimate keeping with the character, the stern realists went home and wept into their pillows.

All this is old stuff, and the only new development is that the critics of Hollywood, one and all, have somehow confused themselves with Billy Wilkerson and are telling Hollywood how to make money. This is brash and regrettable; the boys' hearts are in the right place, but they are in danger of making fools of themselves.

"Business is falling," they say smugly, "we told you that ephemeral glamor would pass." People are now shopping for their pictures, they purr—but my God, fellows, look what Mama brings home from the store!

Of the top grossers of the year, only one, *The Best Years of Our Lives* got up there mainly on the grounds of being adult and realistic, and that, believe it or not, was a fluke. Attendance at *The Best Years*, very satisfactory but not all that spectacular, almost doubled with the tremendous prestige of the Academy Awards. The public supported *Crossfire*, but they bashed in the doors to get at *Green Dolphin Street*, that bonbon. They liked *Boomerang*, but *Desert Fury* had them gibbering with ecstasy. These are not cold figures, or examples merely of star power and advertising. I am a relentless movie-goer, and the rapturous gurgles and delightful whimpers that surrounded me at some of the turkeys would make Tom Pryor's blood run cold.

As for the foreign pictures, the critics say loftily that English pictures are making strides because they are adult. But the most successful English picture, and deservedly, was *Great Expectations*, which is maybe as adult as *Terry and the Pirates*. It was a masterpiece of hokum by the gentleman who raised hokum to the level of art, and it was brilliantly scripted and directed for every last

drop of classy razzmatazz that was in it. The three superb Italian pictures, the critics say somewhat rashly, are taking audiences away from American pictures because of their honesty and dignity. But the one that got much the furthest, *Open City*, was luridly advertised as a red-hot sex-and-horror item, crammed with Lesbians, dope, and torture-by-blowtorch.

Nor are American audiences the only criminals in this line. One of Britain's biggest box-office stars is Margaret Lockwood, and if she has appeared in anything reputable in recent years, we have not heard of it. I have not seen the Italian pictures of Alida Valli, our newest lulu, but those who have, assure me that some of her biggest successes were glamor plus. And the Mexican pictures of Dolores Del Rio, smash hits in Latin America, are basically as outdated in Hollywood terms as the pictures the fair Dolores made up here all of fifteen years ago.

And if you think movie audiences are an especially nincompoop breed take a look at the best-seller book lists.

I am not gloating because the millennium hasn't arrived: I'm sorry too. But the eager rush of the Hate-Hollywood boys to tell us that good pictures can make money (which surprised nobody), is right in line with their long-standing opinion that Hollywood is the root of and focus of all

evil, and that the ermine-swimming-pool set, powerful, corrupt, and sly, are diabolically turning out mass-produced junk to debase the minds of the public and protect their ill-gotten gains. All this, of course, in contrast to our high-souled cousins across the sea.

Offhand, I can't think of any writer, director, or producer who deliberately sets out to make bad pictures. (There are some dubious cases but I think we have to set them down to a peculiar idea of quality—the most persistent makers of stinkers are honestly enthusiastic about their efforts.) Plenty of producers are almost solely interested in making money but most of them try, however ineptly, to make the best picture possible in those terms. Their writers and directors, whose reputations depend less on financial return than on quality, try harder. And the only people who think making commercial pictures is per se criminal are the elegant chowderheads who feel something like *Beauty and the Beast* is on a higher level of art than *The Jolson Story*.

The sad fact is, not that the public particularly likes bad pictures, but that they do not give a damn whether, in critical terms, a picture is good or not. Honest endeavor and high purpose go for nothing unless they pay off on the screen. And, at least in the cost of Hollywood product, that goes for the critics too. The theme of *The*

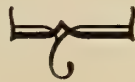
*Guilt of Janet Ames*, for instance, was more adult and ambitious than those of nine out of ten English pictures; but it did not come off, and no one patted it on the head for trying. The critics were down at the Filmarte reading subtitles.

The men who make honest, imaginative, commercial pictures are to be admired. It is not an easy job, but it usually pays off and is wonderful for the conscience. *Boomerang* was a wallowing good commercial story and would have been successful even if Dana Andrews had been prettied up to look like Tyrone Power and Jane Wyatt had been dressed by Adrian. But the so-called documentary approach made it a better picture and gave its creators a lot more satisfaction.

The man who makes honest, imaginative pictures and says to hell with the box-office is even more to be admired, but he will have a rocky road. He will get support from only a small part of the public and, unless his good intentions are realized, no thanks at all from the critics. He will be at odds with the moneymen, who would cheerfully finance nothing but stag reels if they thought it would perk up their returns. And if he has two or three low-grossers in a row, he had better quick turn around and make something like *Dear Ruth*, which isn't such a bad idea at that.

It has not been a good year, but it has not been an entirely ignoble one either. It is too much to hope that the critics and kibitzers will give up Hollywood as their favorite whipping boy—and Hollywood doesn't quite deserve it. But it would be nice if they turned a little of their fire across the waters. And it would be a change if they failed to imply that any Hollywood character not meeting their specifications is necessarily an incompetent, a panderer, or the son of Louis B. Mayer's cook.

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION** ("If It's Foreign It's Fine Division"): An old French picture named *Fanny* showed up in New York recently, and three of the critics, while allowing it was no particular great shakes, mentioned that at least it had the virtues of being a simple, frank little story, the kind Hollywood would neither dare nor condescend to touch. If the boys had checked their history, they would have found (a) Metro made the same picture ten years ago, as *Port of Seven Seas*, with Wallace Beery, Frank Morgan and Maureen O'Sullivan, (b) both scripts follow the original novel so closely that one might be a translation of the other, (c) allowing an edge for the French Raimu over Beery, the Metro picture was also a fair job, with exactly the same merits and faults as the import.



At the request of the magazine *Biografagaren*, published in Sweden, permission has been granted to reprint in full LESTER KOENIG'S piece, *Gregg Toland: Film Maker*, which appeared in the December issue of *The Screen Writer*.



**Stephen Morehouse Avery**

# Field 10

STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY

SOMEONE else heard Charlie Berkeley tell that weird tale about the château the other day. It is a great pity. Charlie is too rare a soul to join the company of not too successful old young men who go along the street mumbling about things which everybody else has forgotten.

What really happened was fairly commonplace: three aviation cadets, wild with inaction in the mud-bound aviation training camp at Issoudun, were running the guard lines on adventure bent—three dim figures blurred by a slow, gray rain into the background of a sloping field. Up beyond Vatan they saw a white château in the woods and went there. No one came to the door, and they finally walked in, walked into the stillness of absolute desertion.

The details were the only queer part. Three card tables remained set up in the drawing room, chairs pushed back and bridge hands face up on the green covers. A half-filled wine glass stood on the mantel. A heap of cold ashes was in the fireplace. A withered flower lay on the bottom step of the central staircase, and on the piano bench was a lady's white glove. The three cadets hurried away to the nearest town.

That's all. But you wouldn't think it was all to see Berkeley's nice blue eyes all screwed up as he blandly connects the thing with poor old Hibbard and tells it as though he himself had seen and heard the whole business. He's too fine a fellow to go on this way.

A great droning, level as silence, filled the warmth of that afternoon. "God's got a tougher job than spotting sparrows if he's keeping tabs on us *pilotes*," said Razz Ryan. Berkeley and Stannard, lounging across the lower level of a double-decker bunk in Barracks 5, laughed. But Razz was right. They were coming down faster than sparrows just then. Another lad stood with his back to them, struggling into an

oil-stained leather flying coat. A soft helmet sat askew on his blond head and a pair of Meyrowitz goggles dangled at his neck. For the lead-heavy skies which had dripped all winter into the red mud flats of Issoudun, where the American training base was mired, were gone. Gone too were the mutinous ditch-digging, guard-walking, mad-to-fly days when the cadets of Issoudun had broken along with their own hearts the hard-boiled will to discipline of a succession of C.O.'s. They were pilots now, officers, and they were flying.

And they were not so eager. During those springtime weeks which were each an era, either of tragedy or the exultant conquest of fear, the dizzy Nieuports had taught them that there was more in the thing than a pair of wings on one's tunic. So if disappointment had driven them into comradeship, now danger made them rare friends, never such friendship, and for so many of that spirited, blithesome band, both the best and last.

But there was no halt. Outside a hundred darting Nieuports made tiny, bright patterns in the sunlight and the moaning of their motors was that droning sound.

The blond lad was gazing meditatively into the square of sky framed in the small barracks window and studded just then with a daystar as a twinkling 15-meter banked up to catch the sun. Yet he did not see the little plane. It was one of those moments when Nieuport and Issoudun and comrades blurred out and from a four-thousand-mile distance appeared the veranda of a miraculous brick house, atop a lawn. Or maybe it was only an ordinary brick house, but the pompous old gentleman and the lady inside of it were miraculous. That much was sure. They expected him back some day.

Also, there was another he thought about, though she had told him he mustn't. He remembered her gray



eyes, black-gray, very wide and burning in their depths with a sort of passionate sincerity. But she had told him he must forget the depths of her eyes and that he must not think of her that way, ever. So he thought of her that way, always.

"Come out of the trance, Tom," said Berkeley. "You'll see Paris before any of us. Give me a cigarette, somebody."

Hibbard faced around, smiling. "I've got a date with a Sopwith Camel this af—this af-ternoon." He had always stammered. "They're very tr-tricky. If I don't get down, you can come up after me with a but-butter-fly net."

Paul Stannard laughed. "You'll come down all right—in the front yard of the Château de Valencay." Every forced landing at Issoudun was jovially assumed to be a subterfuge to spend a few days at a convenient and hospitable château.

But Stannard was not so jovial as he seemed. When Tom had passed out of sight down the aisle between the bunks his friend's expression changed. A drumbeat, sounding at long, dismal intervals, reached them from the roadway in front of camp. But no one spoke of it.

"Old Tom's getting groggy," went on Stannard. They knew the look by this time, a bafflement written across the brow, a strange, presaging moodiness of heart, and then a 27 spinning out of the air and another old cadet gone down. "He's flying too much, too well and too fast. He ought to go to town and get tight, eh, Razz?"

"Why ask me?" said Razz. "But it's a fact about Tom. He's had 18's, the 15's at Field 5, Acrobacy, Cross Country, Formation and now Combat at Field 8 inside of three weeks. No wonder it's got him."

Each of the nine flying fields, some of them apart from the main camp, had its special feature of training. A man went all the way through to become a pursuit pilot, or part way for observation and bombing, or else he was graduated with suddenness from any of the fields to that last one of all which they called—wouldn't you know?—Field 10. It lay just over the hill, a short distance up the road, and nearly every day now a grim little cortège started the journey from the main entrance of camp, a few scratchy band instruments, that slow drum, a shuffling honor guard of rifles, a truck creeping in second gear and many young men going out to fly that day pretending they didn't see or hear or care.

"It isn't the flying that's got Tom," said Berkeley. He hadn't spoken before.

Stannard sat up. "What is it, then? That?" He nodded his head toward the faint, receding sound of that

drum. "You know, Ted Parker—gay old Ted—was about his best friend, and Tom doesn't make friends easily. It seems that everybody he's chosen to like has—Brooks, Carberry—"

"No, that isn't it either," said Berkeley. "I found Tom in town one night, awfully lit. Very queer for him. He was babbling about a girl. Judith, I think. She's just come over with the Red Cross and is in Paris with the flu. But she wrote him not to come. Tom doesn't remember anything that happened that night, and he thinks no one knows. Perhaps one of you can kid him out of it. Take a shot at it."

Stannard and Razz had hopped into the truck bound for Field 7 before the news came in. Berkeley had gone over to the Red Cross canteen to get some coffee and enough ink to write a letter. The girl on duty sat at the table with him for a momentary rest. "Little Thunderfoot" they called her, because of a particularly energetic, chunky way of walking, but her first name was Shannon and she had been there from the very first, and half the boys in the camp were half in love with her. And Shannon was blue today. "I've lost a friend," she said, "Judith Carleton. The dearest there was. Just came over and caught the flu—"

Someone pushed open the door noisily. "Who had the Sop Camel up from Field 8?" he called out. "Well, it came down in a spin over toward Valencay. Somebody saw it all the way to the trees."

Shannon must have been watching Berkeley's face. "Who?" she asked.

Berkeley didn't answer that. He stood up.

"I guess I'll go for a walk," he said. "These things get me down. There's a château up the way which I ought to be able to make before dark." . . .

In reality Tom Hibbard was more curious of the eccentricities of the little Clerget-motored Sopwith than worried. The cockpit was shallow, and he seemed nearer the propeller. The throttle pushed forward instead of back; the stick ended in a handle like the grip of a spade; the instruments were differently placed; the whole ship seemed lighter, jerkier, more delicate on control even than the Nieuport 28.

He'd gotten off all right, straight over the hangars, and at five hundred meters he began a few experimental banks, short dives and zooms. Then with that sense of release, elation, power which fills the expert pilot of these darting little speed hawks, he swung out over the main camp in a wide, free arc.

Down below, in miniature from this altitude, were the rows of long barracks, across from the Red Cross huts, the Y.M.C.A. shelter, several clusters of hangars. On the white tape of the road were tiny black figures

in a short procession. It looked stationary, but he knew it was moving. He could imagine the drum. His elation left him suddenly, and quick thoughts went to Ted Parker, Brooks, Carberry. . . .

Then he started climbing in a tremendous spiral. A fellow could forget if he looked up instead of down. Above was a bank of thick white cloud. He mounted twenty-five hundred meters to reach it and then coasted along within a few feet of a stupendous mass of white which towered over him like a tremulous wall of the world.

Little skeins and veils swirled out to ensnare him, and it was sport to jump and dodge them until, weary of it and moved upon some sheer, laughter-ridden impulse, he turned a vertical bank and plunged into the soft blank depths. Twisting air currents rocked the plane and traced whirling designs in the nebulous shroud which hugged him so close that he couldn't see the wing tips. He might have been climbing, diving, slipping off on one wing or the other, upside down for all his eyes could tell. But there were "feels" which told him he wasn't. He knew he was climbing. The motor was pulling steadily.

It was like coming to the surface of the water after a long dive. He was mounting toward the light and finally burst out into an atmosphere as warming as sparkling gold, as liquid almost as a Vouvray champagne, and the moistened wings were glistening. Beneath him was a carpet for anybody's heaven, soft, undulating whiteness suffused with sunlight, for human eyes have never seen a lovelier thing than the top side of a cloud. The plane hung motionless above it. Far below, out of sight, so far as to be out of reckoning, a planet spun—like a child's top.

But the alchemy of Tom Hibbard's mind had its elements in that spinning toy, and his imagination found in the whirls and shapes of the cloud a spired castle made of stone, a tree made of wood standing in the wind, a man with bowed head and the profile of a girl's face.

"Judith," he murmured and, remembering, tried to smile.

Intellectually he had always understood about Judith. His Judith was his own creation. The real Judith had never loved him, never would, and all those fair hopes of his which dreamed her by his side in this place and that were but the manufacture of his heart. But they were none the less beautiful and they were perhaps more poignant because unreal and because they were his incommunicable own.

Sometimes, when he'd been flying all day, he really dreamed, and it was a strange, exquisite dream. They would both fly, quite without planes, quite by them-

selves, he and Judith. They simply joined hands, spread wide their arms, and, with their outstretched palms serving for ailerons, drifted away rapturously above the topmost green of trees.

Coming free of the level of cloud, Hibbard scanned the geometric imprint of humanity upon the misty earth to get his bearings. He was north of camp. Plainly he could distinguish the smokestacks of Vierzon and still farther north was Romorantin. Directly below was the green rectangle of the Valencay wood with the white jewel of the château gleaming in its center.

He decided to go down a bit and dropped a thousand meters in a series of reversements, wing slips, six or seven turns in a spin. The Sop Camel behaved well. He liked it.

Many of the fellows at Issoudun flew down low to look over the Château de Valencay. It interested them as a contrast of comfort, cultivation, the pleasures of gentle life, against the crudeness of their own days. They imagined weekends there with a small group of congenial men, cards, music, polite talk, a few manners, linen and silver, a little less and better wine and for a change, ladies, nice ladies, something in the way of girls they'd known at home.

Hibbard had another curiosity. He and Charley Berkeley and one of the other boys had found a château once. He wasn't quite sure that they hadn't gotten off the road that day and that the château they found was the Château de Valencay. The wires began to vibrate a little too much, and he eased up on his descent. There was a snap under the seats and suddenly the stick was loose in his hand.

That is all the preliminary there is to a pilot's sentence to death. It would be better if there were none. Tom Hibbard had his moment of frenzy when he saw that his elevators were gone. Take the ailerons, the rudder, the motor, and he would have a fighting chance. But a diving plane without elevators is headed for the ground like a dart from Mars.

He couldn't get the nose up. The motor wouldn't pull it up. So he cut the motor and tried to rudder into a wing slip. No go. Then he crossed the rudder and ailerons and got his spin . . . down . . . down. The air screamed by. A piece of linen ripped away from the wing.

Once at Tours he'd seen a fellow plunge into the field, and just before he hit they all heard him shouting. Hibbard thought of that. He'd seen many planes crash, seen the engines buried five feet deep, seen the twisted unrecognizable wrecks. He thought of all that. He was breathless and blind with dizziness now, sitting back in the cockpit with folded arms.

A smile touched his lips. So this was the way good



old Ted Parker and Brooks had felt. Well, they'd have to move over when he came to Field 10. He remembered his mother and father and Judith. He hoped she was all right now. Somehow, that sudden brightness was unpleasant. Then it all became red, and then black, and that was all right. . . .

Hibbard found himself lying on a matting of thick broad-bladed grass between tall evergreen trees. A pale, wavering network of shadow fell about him, for the sun was low. He sat up and began to laugh. He couldn't stop laughing. He reached into his pocket for a cigarette.

Certainly a queer feeling, like the astonishment one might feel at being born—if one bothered with astonishment then. He knew enough about flying and crashes to realize how ridiculous it was for him to be sitting there rubbing his eyes. He ought to be pulp, and no amount of conjectured possibilities could get around that. Suppose he'd fallen free at the last moment and been let down through the trees. Rot! A lake of feathers wouldn't have saved him. What if the evergreens had been enough to make the tail hit first, then the wings, to take the shock in parts? Silly! That plane had hit all at once, and the engine had gone into the ground like a stone into water.

Yet there he was. To prove it, he stood up and walked the few steps beyond the evergreens where a thick film of smoke marked the wreck. Very little wreck remained; wires, bolts, metal parts lay about, and deeply buried was a twisted mass of steel that once had been a propeller hub and a Clerget motor. Of anything else there was no trace save the white ashes left by the ferocity of a gasoline fire. Had he been there, he would have been ashes too.

Plainly it was a miracle. The sickening sensation which came upon him as he viewed the burned wreck passed away and he felt light-hearted again. It was a great joke to fall two thousand meters and come out of it without a scratch. Nobody would believe him. He didn't quite believe it himself. That made him laugh again.

Looking about, he saw that the open space was part of an aisle through the trees, on one side of it a narrow, white stone path. Through the far end, narrowed in perspective, he made out the white façade of a house, a château. Tom Hibbard slapped his thigh and roared with glee. It was—it must be—the Château de Valency. Of course they wouldn't believe him.

"So I'm 'châteauing' after all, Mr. Sop Camel." He bowed mock thanks to the smoldering remains and struck out down the path. Never had his step been blither. Never had he felt better or happier.

Near the château the path widened into a smooth broad lawn. In its center a marble nymph leaned over the basin of a fountain. Stone benches sat solidly in charming corners. Across the far side the Château de Valency stretched, white.

Nearer, Hibbard heard a piano tinkling and several perfectly American voices dashing violently into a chorus. He would have sworn they were old cadet voices, and by the time he reached the flagging before the rather small front entrance he knew that they were. The sight of Lonny Brooks leaning nonchalantly in the doorway was enough to establish that. Brooks—of all people!

Surprise past, it was grand to see old Lonny's freckled grin again. Hibbard had missed him, and now their rush at each other was something. "Why, you old sober-face!" shouted Brooks, pounding Hibbard's shoulder. "How in thunder did you get here? I wouldn't have thought it of you, you earnest old dog, leaving the A.E.F. flat like this—"

"What is it all about, Lonny?" Hibbard was bewildered.

"What's it about? Let me tell you this is the most splendiferous house party you ever fell into. What we haven't got here ain't. Wait till Ted gets his goggles on you—"

"Ted? Is Ted Parker here? This is the best luck in the world—"

"You said it, Ted! Look what blew in!" Brooks pushed him through a small entrance foyer into a very wide room—groups of Louis Quatorze furniture here and there; a long fireplace at one end; a broad center staircase at the back; doors leading to a sun porch and into other rooms; a piano in the far corner with a half dozen of the old cadets lounging all over it, as though by physical contact they could absorb a little more quality into their voices.

They disentangled themselves when they saw Hibbard. He recognized Ted and Craig Carberry before they all surrounded him with a rough-and-tumble welcome and began calling him a son of a gun, an old bum, a ham pilot, an old booze hound, or anything else sufficiently insulting to serve as a term of endearment.

Tom laughed until tears stood in his eyes. It was one of the happiest moments he'd ever known. Ted, an arm across his shoulders. "How'd you find out, Tom, old dear?" Ted was very tall and quite thin, but there was enough in his face for one to guess that he and Hibbard would be friends.

"How did I find out?" Tom began to tell about the Sop Camel and his fall, but everybody gathered around again and laughed.

"Lay off of it, Tom," said Carberry jovially. "It's old stuff. Give us a new one. You look as though you'd dropped two thousand meters, don't you? No."

Tom drew Ted Parker aside. He didn't feel too well just now. Perhaps he'd had more of a shock than he thought. "Listen, Ted," he said. "There's something funny about all this. I don't quite get it. I thought you and Lonny and—"

Parker patted him on the back. "Forget it, Tom," he said. "Don't tell me that you of all people fell for that Field 10 bunk. Well, don't mention it around here or they'll kid you back to Issoudon."

"But all kidding aside, Ted, the elevator wires broke. I did fall two—"

"Oh, that's all right," interrupted Ted. "Suppose you did! What of it? Who cares how you got here now you're here! You'd better go upstairs and rest a while before dinner. There are ladies. *Ladies*—get me? The old grande dame who is our hostess belonged in the 1870 period, but she's a corker. Full of pep. The rest are peaches, girls from home."

"But aren't you all going back to camp, Ted?"

Parker laughed. "Not so's you could notice it. You can go back any time you want to. But come upstairs now. You've got two hours till dinner and you need 'em."

It was a front bedroom, one of those large French ones, looking out through two full-length windows upon the darkening lawn. A massive canopy bed seemed small in it. Tom could hardly wait to get off his uniform. He was exhausted. The bed was deep. Sleep took him as his gaze was still riveted upon Ted Parker's face.

Hours later, it seemed, a servant brought a tray to his bedside. The man made no unnecessary movement and said nothing, but on the tray were two notes. One was from Ted: "You were down pretty deep, so we didn't waken you for dinner. Better stay in bed until morning. Someone here awfully anxious to see you." The other note was in French, and he understood enough to gather that the Vicomtesse de Valencay hoped that Monsieur le Lieutenant had all that he desired and would join them at his pleasure.

Hibbard's first impulse was to leap up, dress, and dash downstairs. But he decided to think a little first. What object could the people at Issoudun have had in making out that Ted and Lonny and Carberry and these others were—were in Field 10? Why, Charlie Berkeley had seen Carberry come down without a wing at Field 5. There couldn't be any mistake about that. Two of these other boys had collided in combat practice nearly three miles in the air. Survive that?

For a minute or two he lay there wondering if his mind had gone. Perhaps the shock, perhaps that calmness of his as he hurtled earthward had been insanity. But he knew better. He'd never been saner than he was now. Well, then, he'd simply walked into a company of spirits. Some haunting recollection of that room downstairs aligned itself with the idea. But how absurd such maundering was! A man could tell spirit from flesh and blood.

With feverish haste he jumped out of bed and started to dress, opening his door into the corridor slightly to catch any possible sound. And he heard the strains of dance music below and, when it stopped abruptly, the mingling and rise of gay talk. So whatever the situation was, it was a happy one. He was unaccountably happy. His wrist watch told him the hour was nine-thirty when he was ready to go down.

He closed the door behind him and went down the staircase. It was Y-shaped, the two arms meeting at a landing where there was a broad cushioned seat. The light was not too strong there, but he saw a girl in white satin evening gown and with a filigree about her dark hair. Her hands rested upon the seat beside her, and the short oval of her face, which alone seemed bright, was turned toward him as though she had been waiting. It was Judith.

Hibbard stood motionless, taking deep breaths. Not until she smiled did he stir. Then he went down slowly and took her outstretched hand. "Now I know it is only a dream," he said. "Whenever I see in your eyes what is there now, it is a dream. And—if I open my eyes, really open them, I shall of course see Stannard and Razz Ryan in the opposite bunks. So I'll dream on—Judith."

Oh, that tone of sweet laughter which went with Judith's soft voice! "This isn't a dream, Tom. This is the true reality. I came here to wait for you."

"Don't—don't even talk to me," he said. "I want it to last—what you said then. Do you know, I would have given almost life for it. Judith is lovelier than my memory of her."

"Hush," she whispered. "And my precious, never understood Tom-boy doesn't even stammer as he says it. Perhaps his dancing has also improved. So come."

It was true. He hadn't stammered. He didn't feel that he was going to stammer. They walked through the large room into a still larger ballroom. A low balcony surrounded it, and sitting there or dancing were several girls. They were American girls, nodding, laughing, gesturing in the way he knew.

Short steps led to the balcony, and Judith took his hand to lead him there.

All but lost against a high-back chair and dwarfed



by the size of her own puffed-out sleeves, was a little old lady. But her manner and the flow of French with which Madame la Vicomtesse acknowledged him was grand. It appeared that he might have the entire château if he wanted it. Hibbard said "Merci" twice.

But he only wanted Judith to put her hand upon his arm. He'd never had the idea of dancing before. It was simple enough once you got the hang of it. It was so smooth and beautiful with Judith, almost floating.

After, they went out upon the lawn, which was flooded with misty, white light.

"I am puzzled, Judith," he said. "But I am afraid to question. It might end. I was so frightened to hear of your illness —"

She laughed. "It was nothing. One must, of course, go through that. You see, it has taught me so many things. Mostly about you, Tom. Did you know I was about to marry someone? An artillery officer who would have made me unhappy."

"How do you know?"

"Don't you know?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I think it would have been near to sacrilege. I —"

"Don't," she interrupted. "You are not to tell me those things to-night, Tom dear. To-morrow perhaps. But if I wish to talk sweetly to you, I may. It is chilly out here."

The cold breath of night had stolen into the house, and one of those noiseless servants was bent over the fireplace when they came in. Someone suggested bridge, and three card tables were set up. They played progressively, and it was not very serious bridge, though Tom did extraordinarily well for him. When Judith won at his table he gave her a white flower stolen from a vase on the mantel. Then they all threw down the cards to hear a blonde girl play the piano. "She has never played like that before," whispered Judith. "Isn't it fine?"

Later they all went upstairs. A wine cup and cakes had been passed around, and they were sleepy. Tom was the last to go, and he stood lingering at the head of the stairs, wondering and watching as Judith disappeared down the shadows of the corridors.

Then she came skipping back. "Oh, Tom, I've lost my flower."

He caught her hand. "I'll get you a gardenful to-morrow," he said.

"To-morrow? It's after twelve, Tom. It's to-morrow now — and you may say whatever you like."

He couldn't say much. His gaze fell away from her

for a moment. It was all too vague, too startlingly contradictory. But Judith was real. Her hand was warm in his. That burning depth in her gray eyes — that was real. All the intoxicating presence of her was in his arms. Her lips were warm too.

He remained there after she had gone. A heavy tread, like someone walking with leaden soles, drew his attention to the room below. But he saw no one. And then for an instant he saw Charlie Berkeley standing at the foot of the stairs. "Charlie!" he called.

But he couldn't see Berkeley now. He went down a few steps. No sign of him. The card tables were still there, with the cards spread out on the green covers. Someone had put a half-empty wineglass on the mantel and the blond girl had left a white glove on the piano bench. On the bottom step he saw Judith's flower. But he didn't see Berkeley. Must have imagined that . . .

It was a golden morning, just enough haze in the air for the sun to catch upon. Judith had breakfasted in bed evidently, and everyone was out on the lawn or in the gardens when she came tripping down the stairs in a gay blue dress. "Tom!" she called out.

"Here." He answered her from the terrace. "Come out here and look at it, Judith. There's never been a day like this."

She joined him in front of the open windows flung wide to welcome the bright warmth which flooded in. She linked her arm in his. "Are you going to be happy, Tom?"

He smiled down at her. "It makes me think of a dream I used to have back at camp. You and I could fly, without wings or planes, I mean. We simply took hands, spread out our arms, and sailed slowly away together, right over trees like those evergreens out there —"

"Was it only a dream, Tom? Oh, don't you understand yet? Come then. Give me your hand. Now stand in the window and spread out your arms. Wide, Tom. Ready!" . . .

A little procession straggled indifferently back along the road toward the main camp of Issoudun. The truck had gone on ahead. The rifles were carried at ease, and the band instruments were tucked under their bearer's arms. The drum was still.

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STEPHEN MOREHOUSE AVERY, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army, Rtd., distinguished author and soldier, long-time member of the Screen Writers' Guild, and recently elected to its Executive Board, wrote this story for the November 7, 1925 issue of *Colliers'* magazine. The Board considers it his best epitaph.

# The Story-Expert

DWIGHT TAYLOR

*DWIGHT TAYLOR is a Vice President of the SWG Executive Board, and one of Hollywood's best known screenwriters.*

ONE of the major hazards with which the professional motion picture writer is confronted in the pursuit of his calling, is the story-expert. An expert plumber or an expert shot-putter, or an expert in any other line of endeavor is prompted, as a rule, by his very ability, to exercise it. But not the story-expert. He is the one who *tells* the writer how to do it. And he has a supreme assurance which the average creative artist can only envy. I have never seen a story-expert yet who was haunted by the gnawing doubts and indecisions which seem to have beset every writer of ability from Shakespeare to Abraham Lincoln. To him the path is quite clear, not to say well-trodden, and he hustles the reluctant writer along it with all the eager efficiency of a Boy Scout master about to reveal the wonders of Glacier National Park. That writing is actually a creative process seems never to occur to him, and if you should venture to suggest that a good story is woven from the *inside*, rather than something which is hastily thrown together from odd remnants which happen to be hanging around the office, he will look at you with the crafty intentness of a man who is planning to call the story editor for another boy.

The jargon with which he conducts his lectures is also peculiar to himself — “contrived, corny, coincidental, gimmick, weiner, love-interest, conflict, pace”— the list is endless. He has read a book, or possibly two, on play construction many years previously. But, like the boa-constrictor, he has been able to consume this fodder without actually breaking it down, and his digestive progress has been correspondingly slow. Professor Baker’s famous book on playwriting still seems to lurk somewhere within his stomach, in practically the same mint condition with which it first issued from the press. It never seems to occur to him that he may have no initial ability for this type of work, and that a book will not necessarily give it to

him. A writer, for instance might read a treatise on ballet dancing every day in the year, regularly, over and over — learn the difference between a “brise” and a “temps leve,” study the intricacies of an “entrechat,” and yet, without ability should he venture upon a performance, the audience would probably rise as one man and leave the theatre as if it were on fire. The professional writer, however, in the presence of the story-expert, has no such happy alternative.

This jargon which he acquires and uses with all the confidence of some magic touchstone, has not been sufficiently examined for meaning. When I am told that a situation is “contrived” for instance I am inclined to admit that the story-expert is right. My New Standard Dictionary defines the word as “to plan ingeniously devise, invent” which, as far as I know, is the purpose for which I have been employed. This, surely, is the “weiner” for which we have been searching. The only possible way that this word can be used in a derogatory sense, which is evidently the story-expert’s intention, is to say that a situation is “*badly* contrived.”

The story-expert is also very fond of the word “pace,” and in order to achieve it, like Jack-the-Ripper, he indulges himself in an orgy of cutting. In fact, he can be truly said to be more expert with the scissors than with the pen. This may possibly be due to an early grounding in other professions. Whatever its origin “pace” remains an elusive attribute, sacrosanct within the province of the writer and the director, and no mere cutting will alter it in the slightest degree. Scenes may be truncated or jumped, but proper pace cannot be achieved unless it has been first achieved by the writer, and later by the director on the set. I often wonder whether this confusion by the story-expert of “pace” with “speed” may not possibly have something to do with his frequent visits to the track.\* Pace is

\* Not the “sound” track.



actually a rhythm which changes like waves within the rising tide of the story itself, and has very little to do with speed. The sense of pace is an extremely sensitive attribute and the last place I would look for it is in the antennae of a story-expert.

"Too coincidental" is another criticism with which the story-expert bombards the writer from within the armory of his well-fortified position. With these two words he can usually demolish almost any attempt to bring the hero and heroine together. After several weeks of being haunted by the spectre of coincidence, the desperate writer sometimes feels that the only way to bring these two unfortunate people face to face is to have the story-expert ask them up to the office. The fact that they are to be billed together on the marquee, and that many millions of devoted fans are going to lay down their hard-earned cash with the reasonable hope of finding them together inside the theatre, makes no difference to the story-expert. He feels that their coming together is "too coincidental."

THE truth of the matter of course is that the story expert, secretly aware that he is incapable of conceiving or suggesting a sustained scene of any length or content between two people, is forced to fall back on this eternal game of hide-and-seek—a sort of a glorified Blind Man's Buff between hero and heroine. Hemmed in as he is on one side by the Breen office, and on the other by his own shortcomings and lack of ability, the hero and heroine are stirred within the maelstrom of his own helplessness, like two peas revolving in a bowl of thick green soup. This is, incidentally, one of the outstanding differences between the more mature English films and our own. The English writer, in whom his producer evidently has the highest confidence, can be trusted to allow his principal characters to discuss things occasionally;—they are not so inclined to run off in a huff at the approach of an idea—and their ability to write *scenes*, rather than episodes, contributes enormously to the realism and interest of their films. But the story-expert shuns this like the plague. His motto seems to be "When in doubt, *DISSOLVE OUT*," and he is in doubt the greater part of the time. After they have quarrelled, the hero and heroine are seldom allowed to call each other up, or write to each other, or run into each other in the street. They get together eventually by some means of mental telepathy "yet to be devised." Kind friends sometimes bring them together and stand beaming in the corner while they embrace. But on no account must they get together of themselves. The leading man is sometimes a strong enough character to break down the heroine's door or climb through her window. But this method of getting together is usually frowned upon except at *The*

*Hitching Post*, or *The Aztec* in San Diego, where it is greeted with the prolonged cheers it deserves.

"Corny" is another word in the story-expert's vocabulary which seems to give him a feeling of false strength in backing up his arguments. If so, like Salvador Dali, he is leaning on a very questionable crutch. What is "corny"? The closest I can seem to come to defining it is "a shrewd combination of dramatic and sentimental elements which elicits tears, laughter or applause." But what is derogative about that? Certainly it is the purpose of our profession. Offhand it is the only word one can think of which adequately describes those superb moments in *The Jolson Story* where the boy loses his voice in the balcony and starts to whistle, or the old cantor dances with his wife at the anniversary dinner. Leo McCarey is another director who has a special gift for the "corny" which he indulges without shame, and with far greater dignity than those who feel that they have gotten too good for their calling. The word "corny" is a bad offender. It is being used increasingly to discourage any frank expression of emotion, or attempts at high moments of drama. The word is an enemy of the profession. It is the feeble weapon of the emotional invalid. It is essentially a coward's word. It is a bleat from the side-lines.

Why are these hybrids, these gelded centaurs, allowed to cavort at will in these green pastures? Which is the rider and which is the horse? Where did they come from? How are they born? The answer, of course, is they were born of the producers' desire to save time—winged messengers of ill-omen, dashing back and forth between the producer and the harrassed writer, determined to make the most of their brief tenure of reflected glory and effectively trampling on any fresh ideas that may attempt to bloom in their path. As a veteran of fifteen years of writing in Hollywood I have found that my best work has always been done in direct contact with the headman, whomever he may be in any particular unit, and I sincerely believe that it is these so-called story-experts who are responsible more than any one thing for the slough of despondency in which the business finds itself today. The writer is supposed to be the story-expert. A knowledge of stories and story construction is what you are paying him for. If he doesn't have the knowledge, get yourself another boy. But don't pay two men for the same job or there's bound to be trouble.

The danger of these story-experts, if they are allowed to continue with their nebulous function, is that they will eventually take all life out of the business. They are like the kibitzers at a card party—soon the actual players want to get up and go home. Those in high places who really have the interest of this business at

## THE SCREEN WRITER

heart would do well to call in their story-experts some time and ask them to write a story. They are to be kept strictly *incommunicado*, with nothing but a pen and a few sheets of paper, in a locked room. Or if this seems too cruel, place them beneath a mountain of discarded manuscripts to which they have contributed their own special knowledge and force them to eat

their way out. Now that an economy wave has started, let's enter on a new day, a day when the lamb is no longer forced to lie down with the lion, when the stories are written by the writers for a change, and directed by the director. There will still be a place for the story expert: men are continually needed to paint the spots on rocking-horses.



Excerpts from KEN ENGLUND'S *Quick! Boil Some Hot Cliches*, (*The Screen Writer*, February) have been reprinted recently in Virginia Wright's column in *The Daily News*, and in Lowell E. Redelings' column in the *Hollywood Citizen-News*.

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## E D I T O R I A L

### *HAS THE COLD WAR COME TO HOLLYWOOD?*

AS one of the early Dukes of Alba lay dying, his Bishop held out to him his ring to kiss, the episcopal ring in which was set the fragment of the middle finger bone of Saint Pachomius, an anchorite of the 4th Century, and founder of the holy order of Coenobites in Egypt. "Have you forgiven your enemies?" asked the Bishop.

"I have no enemies," said the Duke of Alba calmly. "I have hung them all."

At a party the other night, the head of a studio said to us, "I have no production problems. I have laid off two hundred people."

Is there a real economic crisis in Hollywood, or is there a cold war on, in which we are seeing the Weltpolitik of the studios at work on the local scene?

There are plenty of facts and figures, a great deal of shouting and turmoil, a tearing of graying hair, and a whispering that certain suppurating wounds, inflicted by empires beyond the seas, are bleeding a great art form to death. There are also those who say it is all the blind ungratefulness of insatiable ineptitude in power, now trimming with glee, while the chance is offered. Is there a planned cold war or is there really a panic? Are we facing a depression, or are there being committed a repertory of extremely distasteful raids against the talents that make up the motion picture industry? One can get some profound, even psychological pleas, for either side of this question by stepping up to the nearest "gin" game or mingling with intellectuals.

Meanwhile the great push, solemnly wrapped in high sounding twaddle, appears to have begun. Mr. Sam Goldwyn, one of the greatest picture makers

in this town, a man of taste, talent and an incessant artist for perfection, has announced that his inner guard must take a fifty per cent cut in salaries. One person asked us: Has Mr. Goldwyn lost money this year? Has his tattered Rolls Royce been seen parked outside the employment office to get his unemployment insurance, are they digging up his imported English boxwood hedges and planting cabbages and tomatoes? We didn't know — so we got some facts.

Mr. Goldwyn has had the greatest year of his life. Those very fine pictures, *The Best Years of Our Lives* and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, seen by a genuinely grateful public have poured in their millions.

Has the cold war begun? Is this the opening shot? Has the "atrocities" propaganda already started? Whispers, whispers are all over town. "He said, we'll take up your option, but without the raise." "The front office says, when a contract expires, hire them from week to week." "Don't talk salary, what do you want for a flat deal?" "Don't bother with originals . . . we're remaking old pictures." "We have enough reissues for two years."

Facts are hard to come by. There is a free and easy vagueness about all statements of studio policy. A deep cynical disquietude, difficult to gauge, comes out of front office faces.

We have some facts and figures. 1938 was the last peace year. We are again at peace, have been for over two years. The box office figures today are higher now than they were in 1939. . . they are not as high as they were during abnormal war years. True, costs have gone up, but so have box office admissions. The world markets, by nature capricious, are gone or going. But they have been disappearing for the last decade.

This is no place to recite an economic primer of the motion picture industry; but it's a fact that any good motion picture costing a million dollars, or less, can make back its costs and show a decent profit in this country. Writing is, and has always been, the least cost on any picture. Less than one per cent of the price of most finished pictures. The great increase has been in star salaries, cost of production, and overhead. In fact, overhead alone has doubled, even tripled, in many studios. We are told Warners' now add .60 to their budget — Metro .48 to .50 and Paramount between .50 and .60. Unfortunately, writers have not doubled or tripled their incomes during the last ten years, as have many other branches of the industry. Writers are no better off today, judged by income and employment than they were in 1938. A great many are worse off. There is no sane reason for a cold war. The hope of the motion picture industry maintaining its head above water is the writer. Given the chance to write new, brilliant and entertaining screen stories, he can keep the box office bright and cheerful. Neither remakes nor reissues are a solution. Any pretense that the American public is going to hire a baby sitter, use up a few gallons of gas, order an expensive meal, pay full first run box office prices for a remake or a reissue is bound to fail. There is in most producers' breasts a distrust of writers; something in the nature of a glazed crystalline emotion long dead, like ginger fruit



in dusty ceramic crocks. It goes back to the days when a camera with a man wearing his cap backwards was enough to make a picture. Now the story is the important factor. . . . A good story needs no half dozen big name stars, no million dollars sets, no expensive location trip. Bad pictures do. But such pictures no longer pay back their costs. The public is shopping carefully for its entertainment.

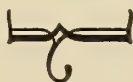
THESE few lines make no pretense to settle the question: Is there a cold war on in Hollywood? It merely tries to call attention to certain facts. Picture making is a democracy, a freely developed blending of many minds and many talents. It is based on courage and a desire to bend back the horizons of entertainment a little bit more each picture. It can not function in fear and terror, or with insatiate parasitic economy. It cannot start with the two strikes of half what man is worth.

Let us face the facts, suppose all contract studio people were suddenly to announce that they were only going to work fifty per cent of the time called for in their contracts. And if the studios made them work full time, they were not going to renew. What an infinite loathing would come the way of these people, what a wall of sharp-toothed lawyers would advance on them and demand that a contract is a sacred thing; what a demand for abject repentance there would be.

So we make no pretense of cleverness, or any claim that a cold war, if there is one, can be stopped by our words before it affects our morale and our abilities. But we do agree with the great historian, Lytton Strachey, when he said, "There are two great influences, without which no growing life can truly prosper — humor and imagination. . . ."

And a motion picture is life — on film.

..... STEPHEN LONGSTREET



## Correspondence

Editor  
*The Screen Writer*

Dear Sir:

In the January issue of *The Screen Writer*, Mr. Stephen Longstreet went to generous and painful lengths to indicate for unemployed writers a broad and happy path to prosperity. Among methods suggested by him was one suggesting the writing of Greeting Cards.

Since reading Mr. Longstreet's inspiring piece, I've worked diligently, day and night, at the noble art. Alas! As yet, no success.

It is my earnest hope that publication of a sample of my work in *The Screen Writer* might attract the eye of a greeting card manufacturer; thus the magazine may become the happy instrument through which my talents will be recognized—and rewarded.

SAMPLE:

GREETINGS,

BROTHER LONGSTREET

Smile a happy smile when jobs are few,

Laugh a happy laugh, give a happy greeting,

Keep your happy trap shut if something bothers you,

Or on the happy Blacklist we'll be meeting.

Fraternally,

LESTER COLE  
1542 Courtney Avenue  
Hollywood 46, California.

★

To the Editor  
*The Screen Writer*

Dear Sir:

I have seen Lester Cole's communication on Stephen Longstreet's article about unemployment. As Chairman of

the Employment Committee of the Guild, I must speak in protest against this cynical distortion of an honest effort to point the way for unemployed screen writers toward interim means of supporting themselves. The article was a source of warm encouragement and stimulation to many writers, presenting, as it did, vistas of fields in which they could conceivably earn at least some part of their living. To deride it on the basis of a suggestion taken out of context, is to damage not Mr. Longstreet, but the confidence of those whom he may have inspired to try their hands at other forms of writing—and who need the money.

I may say that writing slogans for greeting cards might be a good way of trying to pay the milkman while awaiting one's check for 1% of the gross.

Respectfully,

PAUL GANGELIN  
8443 Fountain Ave.,  
Hollywood 46, California.

★

Editor  
*The Screen Writer*

Dear Sir:

In his introduction to Stephen Longstreet's article, *Market For Words*, the Editor of *The Screen Writer* says that "anyone not interested in drowning will find it informative." In the sense he presumably meant it, the piece is informative—in addition to being witty and nimble writing. Mr. Longstreet's intention, of course, was to extend valuable counsel, out of his sophistication and resourcefulness, to the several hundred SWG members temporarily in depression; and a few writers "not

interested in drowning" may profit by his suggestions.

Yet I found the essay somehow dispiriting. For it revealed a kind of moral bankruptcy — and a kind of hard-boiled defensiveness about it — that if unchecked cannot fail to corrupt the Screen Writers' Guild as an effective employee organization. Even more important, at least to me, is the effect such an attitude, extended and compounded, will have on literature and culture in America—including motion pictures.

For good films, like good novels and plays and poems, cannot be written from a "philosophy" of not-caring, or from a greed for money alone. And good unions are not built by men and women interested in self-preservation. *Gentlemen's Agreement* and *The Informer* and *All Quiet On The Western Front* were not written by men whose sole concern was their paycheck; nor was *It Happened One Night* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*. These people *cared*—about what they had to say, and how they said it. And a SWG worthy of its name must *care* about the ten victims of the cruelly reactionary Thomas Committee if it is to survive as a collection of men of dignity.

It will be charged, inevitably—and with the inevitable wit so characteristic of guild-driven individuals—that I am reading a ponderous significance into Mr. Longstreet's Madison Avenue *feutillon* it neither contains nor deserves. I don't think so. For beneath his tough charm is the sour dough of despair; and behind his "practicality" is the notion of adjustment-through-compromise which has been the alibi of every man who substituted expediency for morality — from the man who wrote the Munich Agreement all the way back to the writer who coined the cliché about any old stick to beat a dog.

Fact, not snobbery, gives the writer



his feeling of being special in society. His gift of capturing emotion and speech and idea in print may stimulate the envious bile of some people—but it compels the respect of all people. Ours is an honorable profession, from Euripides to Lillian Hellman. And it is honorable mainly because it has been populated by men and women who used their talent to implement their morality—rather than using it to subvert their morality.

In advising the unemployed and panicky writer to abandon the idealistic principles he developed in adolescence, and debase ideas and style to “wordage” and pulp, Mr. Longstreet is doing a distinct disservice to the writing profession. For it is the matured echo of this adolescent morality (however it may be streaked with narcissism and rebellion) which eventually produces a *War and Peace* and *Hamlet*; and *The Best Years of Our Lives* too.

Mr. Longstreet has written an excellent, and persuasive, primer for prostitutes. And it has been published by the official organ of the Screen Writers' Guild, whose editors evidently felt it met a problem with a realistic solution. Is it really that late in Hollywood?

JOHN BRIGHT  
1815 So. Beverly Glen  
West Los Angeles, Calif.

My father can lick Mr. Bright's father.

STEPHEN LONGSTREET

★

(Editor's Note: The letters of Mr. Cole and Mr. Bright are samples of several communiques received concerning Mr. Longstreet's article. Along with those praising the piece, there were a few like the above and no further purpose is served in publishing them as they were strangely identical in content.)

★

Editors  
*The Screen Writer*  
Gentlemen:

Thanks for giving us a magazine that is of some use and interest to writers. For years it seemed as if the magazine were little more than a bath tub for Brave, Small Voices, Lonely Primitives, Wailing Dreamers, and all the high-piping, Awake-and-Arises — a sort of plush monthly supplement to *The Peoples World*. Where, by the way, are all the lads who were hollering for us to cut down our exports to help the comrades overseas—are they all happy now?

Anyway, thanks for what is too often a thankless job.

MYLES CONNOLLY  
1305 North Sweetzer Ave.  
Los Angeles, California.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Washington

13 February, 1948.

Mr. Sheridan Gibney,  
Screen Writers' Guild,  
1655 Cherokee Avenue,  
Hollywood, California.

Dear Sheridan:

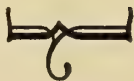
I was grieved to hear of the death of Steve Avery. At various times in the past history of the Guild Steve provided, always somewhat shyly, a certain amount of moral strength and clear thinking to the complexities of Guild problems. Behind his natural reserve I found in those earlier days a deep and sincere interest in the, at that time, more or less commonly accepted purposes of the association. He was a sound workman too which is a consideration that, now in this distance of time and place, I have begun to feel was often lost sight of in the evaluation of Guild leaders.

I will be grateful if you will convey my feelings to the members of the Board. With personal good wishes.

As ever,

Ralph.

RALPH BLOCK  
3002 R. Street, N.W.  
Washington, D. C.



A LISTING OF SCREEN WRITERS' CREDITS  
EARNED ON FEATURE PRODUCTIONS  
OF CURRENT AND RECENT RELEASE

CREDITS

JANUARY 1, 1948 TO FEBRUARY 1, 1948

**A**

**MAXWELL ANDERSON**  
Play Basis, KEY LARGO, W.B.  
**LEOPOLD ATLAS**  
Joint Screenplay (with John C. Higgins)  
CORKSCREW ALLEY, Eagle-Lion

**B**

**DWIGHT BABCOCK**  
Adaptation, THIRTEEN LEAD SOLDIERS,  
(Reliance Pictures) Fox  
**JEANNE BARTLETT**  
Joint Screenplay (With S. Lewis Meltzer)  
MAN-EATERS OF KUMAON, Monty Shaff  
Prod.

**ARNOLD BELGARD**  
Sole Original Screenplay HALF PAST MID-  
NIGHT (Sol Wurtzel) Fox  
Sole Original Screenplay DANGEROUS YEARS  
(Sol Wurtzel) Fox

**ALVAH BESSIE**  
Joint Screenplay (with Louis Morheim and  
Herbert Margolis) SMART WOMAN, Allied  
Artists

**RICHARD BROOKS**  
Joint Screenplay (with John Huston) KEY  
LARGO, W.B.

**GEORGE CARLETON BROWN**  
Sole Story THE FIGHTING TERROR, W.B.

**L. BUSH-FEKETE**  
Joint Screenplay (with Arnold Manoff)  
CASBAH, Marston Pictures

**JOHN K. BUTLER**  
Sole Original Screenplay SECRET SERVICE  
INVESTIGATOR, Rep.

**D**

**PHILIP DUNNE**  
Sole Screenplay FOR FEAR OF LITTLE MEN,  
Fox

**E**

**IRVING ELMAN**  
Sole Screenplay THIRTEEN LEAD SOLDIERS,  
(Reliance Pictures), Fox

**G**

**HELEN GEISEL**  
Joint Screenplay (with Theodor S. Geisel)  
DESIGN FOR DEATH (S) RKO

**THEODOR S. GEISEL**

Joint Screenplay (with Helen Geisel) DE-  
SIGN FOR DEATH, (S) RKO

**GERALD GERAGHTY**

Sole Original Screenplay PRISON TRAIN,  
Rep.

**BERNARD GIRARD**

Sole Screenplay THE FIGHTING TERROR,  
W.B.

**FRANCES GOODRICH**

Joint Screenplay (with Albert Hackett and  
Sidney Sheldon) and  
Joint Story (with Albert Hackett) EASTER  
PARADE, MGM

**LEON GUTTERMAN**

Joint Story (with Edwin V. Westrate)  
SMART WOMAN, Allied Artists.

**H**

**ALBERT HACKETT**

Joint Screenplay (with Frances Goodrich and  
Sidney Sheldon) and  
Joint Story (with Frances Goodrich) EASTER  
PARADE, MGM

**JOHN C. HIGGINS**

Joint Screenplay (with Leopold Atlas)  
CORKSCREW ALLEY, Eagle-Lion

**RICHARD HUBLER**

Joint Adaptation (with Alden Nash) MAN-  
EATERS OF KUMAON, Monty Shaff Prod.

**JOHN HUSTON**

Joint Screenplay (with Richard Brooks) KEY  
LARGO, W.B.

**K**

**JAY RICHARD KENNEDY**

Sole Original Screenplay TO THE ENDS OF  
THE EARTH, Col.

**M**

**ARNOLD MANOFF**

Joint Screenplay (with L. Bush-Fekete)  
CASBAH, Marston Pictures.

**HERBERT MARGOLIS**

Joint Screenplay (with Alvah Bessie and  
Louis Morheim) SMART WOMAN, Allied  
Artists

**S. LEWIS MELTZER**

Joint Screenplay (with Jeanne Bartlett)  
MAN-EATERS OF KUMAON, Monty Shaff  
Prod.

**LOUIS MORHEIM**

Joint Screenplay (with Alvah Bessie and  
Herbert Margolis) SMART WOMAN, Allied  
Artists

**P**

**ROBERT PRESNELL, Sr.**

Sole Original Screenplay FOR YOU I DIE  
(Arpi Prod.) Film Classics

**R**

**SAMSON RAPHAELSON**

Sole Original Screenplay THAT LADY IN  
ERMINE, Fox

**ALMA REVILLE**

Joint Adaptation (with James Bridie) THE  
PARADINE CASE, Vanguard Films

**TIM RYAN**

Joint Screenplay (with Gerald Schnitzer and  
Edmund Seward) JINX MONEY, Mono.

**S**

**ADELA ROGERS ST. JOHN**

Adaptation SMART WOMAN, Allied Artists

**GERALD SCHNITZER**

Joint Screenplay (with Tim Ryan and Ed-  
mund Seward) JINX MONEY, Mono.

**DAVID O. SELZNICK**

Sole Screenplay THE PARADINE CASE, Van-  
guard Films

**SIDNEY SHELDON**

Joint Screenplay (with Frances Goodrich and  
Albert Hackett) EASTER PARADE, MGM

**ROBERT SMALLEY**

Joint Screenplay (with Rodney Carlisle)  
LET'S LIVE AGAIN (Frank Selzer Prod.) Fox

**EARLE SNELL**

Sole Original Screenplay CARSON CITY  
RAIDERS, Rep.

**V**

**JOHN VLAHOS**

Joint Story (with Herman Wolf) LET'S  
LIVE AGAIN (Frank Selzer Prod.) Fox

**W**

**EDWIN V. WESTRATE**

Joint Story (with Leon Gutterman) SMART  
WOMAN, Allied Artists

In this listing of screen credits, published monthly in THE SCREEN WRITER, the following abbreviations are used:  
COL—Columbia Pictures Corporation; E-L—Eagle-Lion Studios; FOX—20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; GOLDWYN  
—Samuel Goldwyn Productions, Inc.; MGM—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios; MONO—Monogram Pictures Corporation;  
PAR—Paramount Pictures, Inc.; PRC—Producers Releasing Corporation of America; REP—Republic Productions, Inc.;  
RKO—RKO Radio Studios, Inc.; ROACH—Hal E. Roach Studio, Inc.; UA—United Artists Corporation; UNI-INT'L—  
Universal-International Pictures; UWP—United World Pictures; WB—Warner Brothers Studios. (S) designates screen short.

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# Book Reviews

By STEPHEN LONGSTREET

## A THEME FOR AN AMERICAN

### "HENRY V"

I HAD been spending the last few weeks reading some books on the American Civil War; known in the Johnston office as the "War Between the States." Good, solid books loaded with facts, honesty, turmoil, terror and a kind of violent action, that was, and remains, purely American in its thoughts and emotions.

No mere war of plundering men in iron (rimmed with a decaying chivalry) comes anywhere near the gallant epics of those who were at Bull Run, saw Cold Harbor plain, or died in The Wilderness.

After dinner one night my producer friend dropped in to pick my brains; the producer with the large behind, the one who sweats pure chicken fat.

"Me," he began, "I'm only interested in different kinda pictures. Like that English poet, Skeats." (Honest—the man said it, the man did.)

"I remember when you make a drunk picture after *Lost Weekend*, and a priest picture after *Going My Way*."

"The lousy front office. I hadda do it."

"They twisted your arm?"

My fat friend relaxed his rump and wiped chicken fat off his brow. "Boy, if I had me a Henry the Five."

"You liked *Henry V*?"

"Loved it the best. Didn't understand much of the limey dialect. But that's the kind of picture I want. Henry the Five, and *that* there battle!"

"There are a dozen events in American history that are as important as the battle of Agincourt."

"Not in my files, baby. And I got the best files in town. Name me three ideas as good as Henry the Five?"

"No dice," I said. "I only think of ideas while I'm on payroll."

But after Chicken Fat left, I sat down and looked at the books I had been reading, and I knew that in these books was an American epic, a motion picture with the heroic content of Henry the Five, its characters and its people; all lay waiting for some motion picture to discover them.

Agincourt to Gettysburg. Agincourt, a mere English invasion of other people's land, in the usual British grab and plunder, made magic by a great poet. Gettysburg, the battle to decide if we were to have Union, remain united, be one to face some day a world of wolves across the sea.

Not Henry, an English king invading for glory and pride, but Lee coming hell-for-leather up through the mountain passes to cut the Union to bits. . . .

All the books on the table merged into one great theme, focused on one facet of the great struggle.

Douglas Southall's classic three volumes of *Lee's Lieutenants*; the text and pictures of *Mr. Lincoln's Camera-man: Mathew Brady*; the forgotten novel, J. W. DeForest's *Miss Ravenel's Conversion*; the collection of original documents, *The Story of Johnny Reb*; Clifford Dowdey's *Experiment In Rebellion*; Margaret Leech's *Reveille In Washington*; a fifty cent, *Tour of Gettysburg Battlefield*.

I could see the people in the village, the men in the fields, the waiting in Washington and Richmond. And the battle itself! The one Chicken Fat wanted to equal Agincourt.

Here came Lee to start the fighting. . . .

Saint Lee. Massa Lee. Lee, banging doors in the halls of history. And other names.

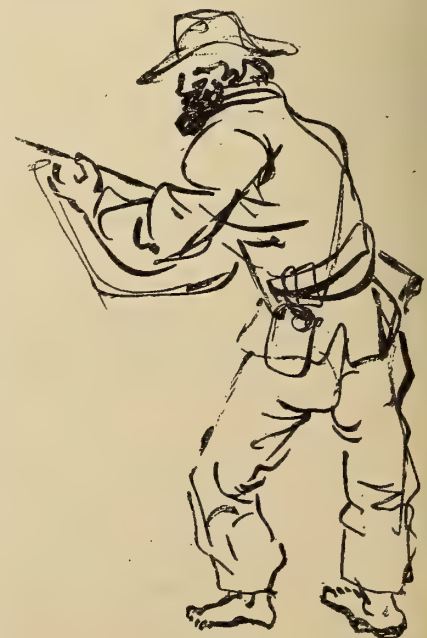
The blue horsemen under crack-brained Custer, under Farnsworth and Merritt, all fresh-made generals,

came scouting and whooping out of Washington. Meade would wait before Gettysburg, holding there Reynolds' one corps. Buford's faded, war-wise horse; and Howard and Sykes and Slocum at Hanover, at Emmetsburg. Meade would fight if he had to.

So July first came to Gettysburg.

Blue horses along a railroad track. Stinking hot.

At nine in the morning a gray division clashed into a Union cavalry picket. There was the silver terror of sabers in the air, and the charge, roaring a throatful of sounds, cut and hacked at gray foot sluggers. Oh, you infantry! But it was Dixie; Heath of Hill's heavy advance. They fell back and lured the gray men on until death in black hats tore out at Heath. The Union Iron Brigade. Brave, dirty bastards. War-wise. Three yearsful.



The gray men growled, spat, and died in heaps, for this was war and no cause for surprise. They reeled back, in turn, one brigadier going down to cough out his own life, another tied to a captive saddle.

The battle had begun.

The feelers of both hosts had brushed together.

The gray artillery came in, sweating for action. Many bursts worked to tear the world to bits.

Hill came up by divisions. Men tore at their opened throats and cursed and lay down to die. Men swore and looked at where their limbs had been. Men wept. Men died in disorderly clusters, and fed thin steel into one another's soft bellies. Sent slugs to smear the brain cases of fellow men. The hosts have locked. The perpendicular rays of the sun looked down on battle.

A blue horse came forward to hold the blue lines steady, and a coon-hunting rebel sharpshooter split the blue head at a hundred yards. The horses opened wide their red nostrils and screamed. The smoke made demons, black demons, of all. The rebel yell came out of corn-fed throats and died on lips that had kissed Dixie wenches farewell. Oh, desolate gals! Wait no more for me. Life went out of eyes that had seen New Orleans. And Charleston too, goddam your Yankee soul!

Reynolds was the tall dead horseman. A general. He from the battlemented belfry of the Lutheran Seminary had seen that here they *must* fight Lee in force. Or lose the Army of the Potomac. Lose Washington. Lose all. Lose the blue men gathered there. And, before the coon hunter brought him crashing down, his notes reached Meade, Howard, Slocum, Sykes, telling them to hurry—to hurry for Christ's sake, hurry. *They are up in force. We must fight here. Here and now.* Or lose. Bring up the blue, close-packed lines of mothers' sons.

We must hold that high crest, Cemetery Ridge.

Doubleday took over the blue sweating ranks, and horse and foot were in for a fight. Give them a song, drummer boy. The drummer boy is in the line with a six-foot rifle, sir!

Find Buford's horse; and it was needed with that mad, laughing devil, Ewell, coming up like a coon after a fat shoat. The shells made hell of old trees and tore the lift out of hundreds of Yankee hearts.

Howard came with his finest Germans, in blue. If this was liberty, they would fight and die for it *here!* Far from Berlin, far from the homes they had left to find freedom here in God's green acres. The Germans went in and died on the double quick. What they had missed at Chancellorsville they won here. Death or glory, or both.



The grays were stopped and they fell back to curse in drawls, and to pull butternut homespun over dirt-filled wounds. The hospital train is far away. Bugles, the charge again! Not many of river clan will be left to hunt the deer or spark the gals in the cotton clearings. Or drink the raw corn likker. Pot mashed and no tax paid. None.

Warn Howard that Early has come on the scene with his panting devils in their ladies' hats and long plumes. And sharp steel.

Early has caught the Germans and broken their flank—two blue corps go back in panic to take new hold on Cemetery Ridge. To catch new breath. New courage. Hill and Ewell are close.

Meade has lost his breakfast and comes running without halt, or food, to Gettysburg. Another Union force pitched away. He sent Hancock to hold the lines. And men in blue, raving mad, are on Cemetery Ridge, stifening the line that looks into the smoke and rebel curses below. By four, Hancock, with reserve artillery and Kilpatrick's horse, is at the Ridge.

The first stage of the battle is history.

The grays have fallen back to wait and see what Lee can think of. Lee and that mind of his. Lee is the South.

But now the heavy Union regiments are coming up by the thousands. The goddam, slogging infantry with smelly feet is ready to die.

The sky is dark. The troops lie on the ground and speak of yellow girls in Virginia, barns, roast cow, chaw tobacco; and write letters home and trade last gifts; and load arms. The rebel guns cut flames in the night and half Gettysburg sleeps in the cellar tonight. Many of the men in gray stand gaping in yokel wonder.

Here is Meade, sore as a trooper's ass, and soon dawn will come. To see more men die. Eat your bacon cold. Eighty thousand men in blue here. All armed. All ready. See the night gleam of the frigid blades that are Union bayonets.

There are 75,000 grays and Lee is on hand. Oh, for Stuart! We need more horses. The Union is many. Too many. Or around their left flank would go the cotton clerks, the field hands, the noble drunkards, the young college lads, the planters' sons, the Solid South.

The general laughs at Yankee Meade. A fathead like all the rest of the blue generals. Full of learning and no guts.

Dawn. The dead lie, twisted. The wounded whimper and nurse shattered parts. The wet dew is cool, but a red-orange sun means hell today.

This is the plan. *Lee's own.* Ewell, the Union right. Smash them. But good. Take Culp's Hill. Longstreet, around the Union left. Tear it apart and meet Ewell in their rear and then hug them to death.

(*Fourscore and seven years.*)

Lee, you are too slow, too slow. They wait for you in a peach orchard. Sickles' boys, dirty and war-washed. Babes under the fruit. Many sick with green peaches. They will fight you to the last. Here are horsemen, dismounted, fighting with Spencer repeaters. Deadly little bastards.

Meade feels none too strong. What Union leader ever did, till Grant? He sees a chance to blast in among the peach trees.

To die, hand to hand with a stinking rebel who is hacking at your liver. To tear, to saw your life out on a bayonet held by a sweat-recked blue



soldier. Was that God's plan? Was that why you mammy loved you pap-py? Was that why you took a bride and lay with her to plant a child, before you went down, a hash of meat and bone and blue-red tissues? Was this why you read Latin, drove a fast horse, saw dawns, planned books, made amorous avowals, played music, hunted with hounds, and sailed a skiff?

Don't stand there, nonchalantly, laughing fit to die. They chop limbs behind that privy. A slug of corn and a dull knife and, oh, God, is this the full life? *Shoot down all stragglers!*

Here comes Hood. A Texas wild-cat. Captain Hood's Texans! (But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate.)

Wounded to the rear! Wounded walking, staying in line! Can you see them now? Yes, proud, yelping men, and the slant of steel in the sun, and to have lived this is wonderful and dreadful, and to live on afterward a miracle! Come, you persistent rebels!

Little Round Top where usurious death piles his wheat. The 20th Maine has beat the bloody buggers of Hood's to the top. It's not a battle there. It's a slaughterhouse. Union guns! See the wheels flash in this boiling sunlight. Hood is done for. Go back to Texas. Not Hood. He fights on.

Hood has lost an arm. The meat he bore from birth is gone. And three good long bones with it. A flap of bloody flesh and *thanks for the fight*. Harum-scarum back, boys.

The battle rages. You choke. You vomit up last year's meals. The bile is bitter. The spit is dry cotton. The armpit sweat is acid. The powder rasps your throat.

And Lee's plan? He had waited too long. They lock up along the front for the night.

The second day at Gettysburg is over.

Guns still bark and the heaped-up dead are corded like firewood. The wounded think of homes and mothers. And the men of God tell last tales of a better Heaven than this.

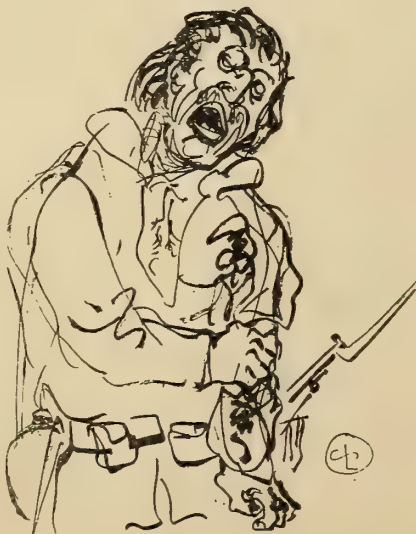
If we beat Lee now, we tear Jeff Davis from his dreams. If we kill enough now and blacken our names with their orphans and widows, we'll be together later when we have to face a world gone mad some other day. (*That this nation, under God, shall have a . . .*)

We ride at dawn to see if Stuart and his horse, and that corps d'elite, Pickett's Virginians, have come up.

Stuart is in. Fagged and dirty and stiff with saddle boils—but ready and determined to go in. Pickett is here, ready to make history books remember. And the dead and many a mammy's little nipper will have no more shortnin' bread; many a cotton-castle knight will ride no more among the blossoms, will see no more the dark-green palmettos. The worms, the maggots and the pus-filled germs will dance tonight where blue-blood and galley slave and bonded servant, and transported Newgate rakes and Baltimore Duke's grandsons once lived a full life. Go *sloughing off to Armageddon*.

Well, Lee? Where the blow? Fail now, and drag the proud starred-and-barred banners down. This is high tide, man! The broken butternuts, the hill-billies, the gentlemen, the book learners you brought up here to spit lungs and hold life and gut in with a handful of fingers don't want to have died in vain. They lie in the night, among the wounded. Their teeth and throats are bare, their blood feeding peach-tree roots. What now, Lee? What concentrated ferocity to swing the battle?

Meade's wings were badly hurt. *So muses Lee*. Shattered, even if not in ruin. He would reinforce them from his center. Militia left there, most likely. Farm boys, home guards. We hit them hard and drive them back. Good? Yes, general—back to their mothers' teats. Back with a fire they have never met before. Then,



Pickett, like a storm from Genesis, to blast them dead. On the center, their weak spot. That is the plan. Lee's. Lee's. (*Of the people, by the . . .*)

Some doubt Meade is not the zany the other Union generals have been. He stayed to fight. Which other of Lincoln's had fought on into the third day?

However.

All bow to Lee's will. Get ready, buglers. The advance with the sun's ray. Hot as Old Nick's broilers.

July third.

Muskets bark over the dead, carbines snap bolts over the wounded. Shells shout over the heaving horses. Shells, bull's-eyes, into the screaming horses. Brawling guns. Rumbling batteries. Fire!

Down Lee's Seminary Ridge, hundreds of wheeled guns come toiling. Lee is massing. Massing for the center.

Lee signals to Alexander of the artillery. Fire. The earth jumps like a turpentine cat. The Olympian condescension of the big shells. Trees, men, houses tremble. God would tremble, too, if he were there. He should tremble. He made in his image these bloody, murderous, brave ants breaking the still of the morning.

Two o'clock. Cemetery Ridge is catching it. The ridge where old signs read *No Guns Allowed in This Cemetery*.

Lee is giving all.

Guns. Men. Shells.

Two glory hunters clash on the flanks. Hampton of the red shirt and Custer of the blond hair combed out long and curled.

Clash now in locked madness. Rear stallions; bite mares; fight geldings, for the wet colts you'll never top anyone for. Bleed, horses. Swift preferred you to men. (*Wise Swift. Mad Swift. A shilling a look.*) Die, Yahoos! Die, Houyhnhnms!

Three o'clock. (A British frump. *Wouldn't have missed this for anything in the world!* Longstreet, pale with hate! *I would.*)

Fifteen thousand men go roaring past. Ready; go. Pickett is charging.

The last hope.

For Lee. For Jeff Davis. For Judah Benjamin. For Alex Stephens. *For Dixie*.

Lee was wrong. The center was not weak. No home guard. No suckling holds the center. Hancock. The

Second Corps. The best in the whole — Union Army!

Hundreds ground to pulp by Union fire.

Fifteen thousand come on in a tidal wave. Poor fools. To die when all is lost. Poor heroes. To walk into the guns and bake yourself to death. To have shot go shattering through you like a giant physic. To broil to death with your head in the mouth of the cannon. To come apart in atoms. To melt into nothing.

The top of the ridge. The top! At last! But how few!

Gettysburg is over.

The South is over as an invader. Over as a winning foe.

The countercharge of Webb's Pennsylvanians goes past in a blur of fury. Goes past, and sends the last shots into the patched buttocks of home-spun pants. The blood haze that will be Lincoln's Gettysburg ends in a blast of bugle-ringing charges. The day dies away *de crescendo*.

*Gravediggers. Your shovels, please.*

**M**AYBE Chicken Fat, my producer friend, wants something a little more about a personality, about one man. Someone who hasn't been cut to formula hash on the screen before.

I would like to suggest *WINSLOW HOMER*, by Lloyd Goodrich. It's about time we forgot the German and French scientists with their beards brushing rare germs off the table, or the singers and dancers out of jazz' past, or the coy ladies who loved great men and who suffered for it (usually at the box office).

Winslow Homer is most likely



America's greatest painter. He was a New England Yankee with horse sense for an eye for significant detail. He led an exciting life, and poor Mr. Goodrich, an art critic—and a good one—tries hard to hide the fact that Homer liked the gals a little too much. But those paintings of sloe-eyed women, the tight-gowned ladies, the wide and sensual fishergirls, the dancing women on the summer porches on moon-lit nights, tell us a real man existed. The big girls with the beautiful bodies that he soaked in the sea and painted wet, all point to the fact that the stuff Chicken Fat calls "the romantic crap" played a large part in making a great painter into a great artist.

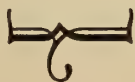
There is also the mystery of Homer's last years; the hermit hurt by some woman, retiring from the world, painting the sea again and again, yet to the end escaping to the

tropics every year, and going almost insane with color; painting the greatest watercolors in the history of art. Let's forget for a while, Van Gogh, and Picasso and our awe of Dali's chic delicatessen, and look homeward to our own great masters, of whom we have as yet too few.

**B**UT if my friend Chicken Fat must have his escape to another shore, may I call his attention to a new collection of the wonderful novels of Thomas Love Peacock. Who is Thomas Peacock? He practically invented Aldous Huxley, and all the better parts of Evelyn Waugh.

Those of us in the late Twenties, and early Thirties, who were excited by *Chrome Yellow*, *Point Counter Point*, *Brave New World*, *A Handful of Dust*, *Vile Bodies*, *Decline and Fall* were tricked into accepting secondhand goods . . . fine material too, but not the original. The Huxley-Waugh novel was first called *Nightmare Alley*, *Crochet Castle*, *Headlong Hall* and *Gryll Grange* and published from 1816 to 1861, and then forgotten by all but a few literary ragpickers in the grab bag of discarded trends, and Mr. H. and Mr. W.

The book, *PLEASURES OF PEACOCK*, is edited by someone called Ben Ray Redman, a bad and foolish editor who takes on himself the curse of cutting down five of seven novels in the collection into *Reader's Digest* pap. The two that are printed as written, by the author, are lulus, and there are enough bloody fragments of the rest to make it worth reading. These are comedies of manners, written on a high level, and as such, never really go out of fashion, either as books or motion picture ideas.





# NEXT MONTH AND THEREAFTER

RAYMOND CHANDLER

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TALBOT JENNINGS

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F. HUGH HERBERT

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WALTER H. SCHMIDT

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DR. ARNOLD WELLES

Experiment in Reaction

DWIGHT TAYLOR

You Know How They Are

And Further Articles by KEN McCORMICK, SAMSON RAPHAELSON, ISOBEL LENNART, STEPHEN LONGSTREET, HOWARD J. GREEN, RICHARD G. HUBLER, THORNTON DELEHANTY, MAX WILKINSON, EWING SCOTT, ERNEST PASCAL, and others.

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## *Special Announcement*

*Next month, April, 1948, marks the Fifteenth Anniversary of the present Screen Writers' Guild, and the April issue of THE SCREEN WRITER will be an "Anniversary Issue," containing special articles by members well qualified to speak on the progress and history of this Guild since its formation fifteen years ago.*

*Among the contributors will be:*

EMMET LAVERY

CHARLES BRACKETT

SHERIDAN GIBNEY

MARY McCALL

HOWARD J. GREEN

EDMUND HARTMANN



*With the anniversary issue*

THE SCREEN WRITER

*will also appear in new format*

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# The Screen Writer

Volume 3 — June, 1947 - May, 1948



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# Letter From Mexico

GORDON KAHN, Editor of THE SCREEN WRITER, took a month's leave in order to fulfill an assignment from a national magazine on the subject of American film companies' operations in Mexico. He writes from there:

Dear Staff: My business here is completed. I can't say "happily completed" because I wish the assignment had lasted longer. I like Mexico, its people and its land. And I like watching the way a Mexican crew, from prop boy to cameraman meshes its operations and gets a script onto film.

Not as any plenipotentiary, but entirely on my own, I paid a fraternal call on our colleagues, the organization of Mexican screen writers. Its full and official name is a mouthful in any language: La Seccion de Autores y Adaptadores del Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Produccion Cinematografica de la Republica Mexicana. Its two officials who welcomed me are Adolfo Fernandez Bustamente and Rafael E. Portas.

Over Mexican cigarettes that would knock the hat off even a writer of Westerns, we talked about our craft, the condition of the film industry in our respective countries and the writer's present and future in it. I got more than I gave at this visit, and frankly, what I handed them was a few laughs, which, to my face were polite enough.

For instance, they asked me about the kind of contracts American screen writers are required to sign as they undertake an assignment. I told them that the MGM writer's contract weighs somewhere around 11 Troy ounces and runs to 36 mimeographed pages. The WB schedule of "terms and conditions of writer's employment" scales slightly less; but then it is on thinner paper.

"And who, Senor Kahn," Senor Bustamente asked me, "prepares these

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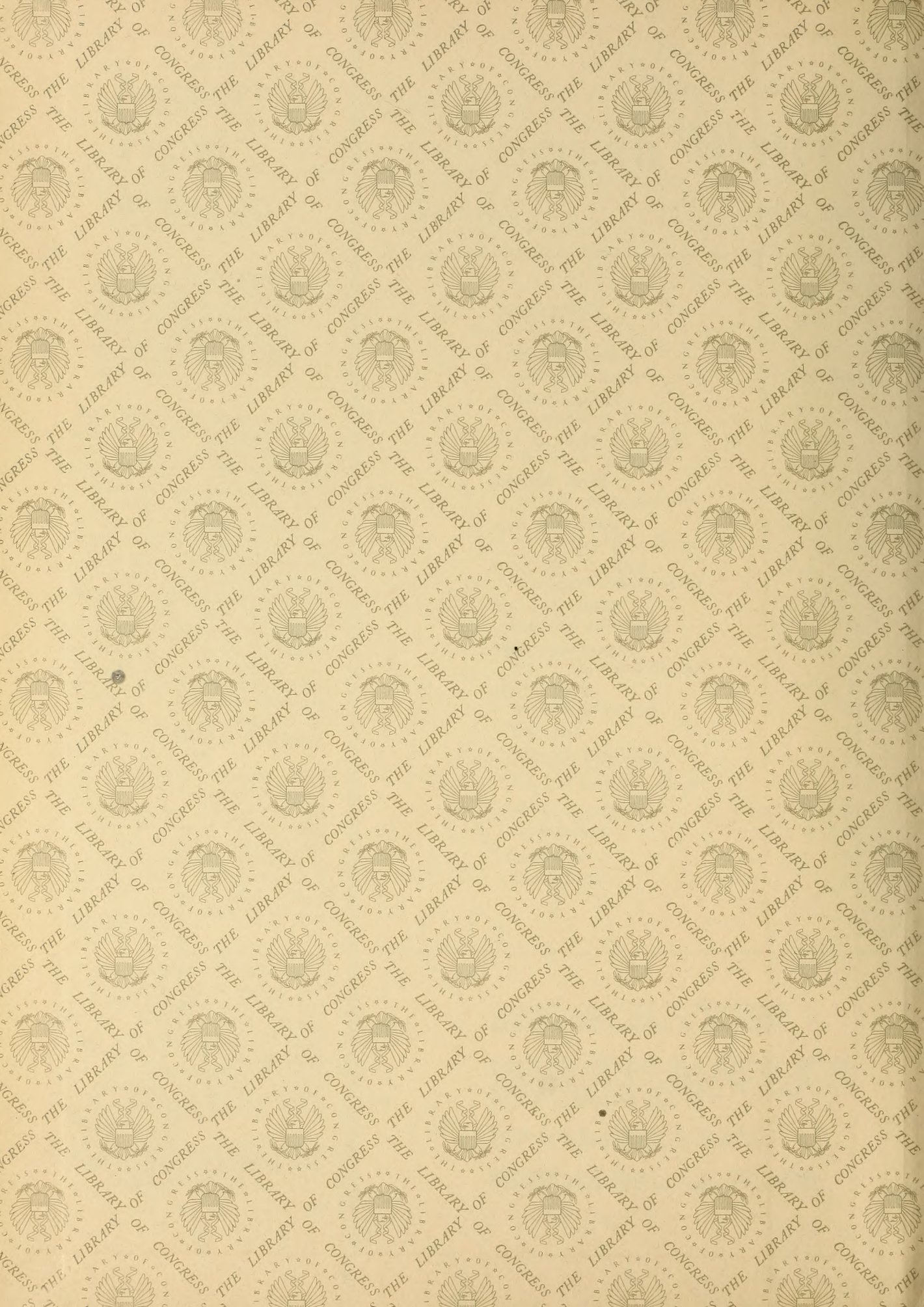
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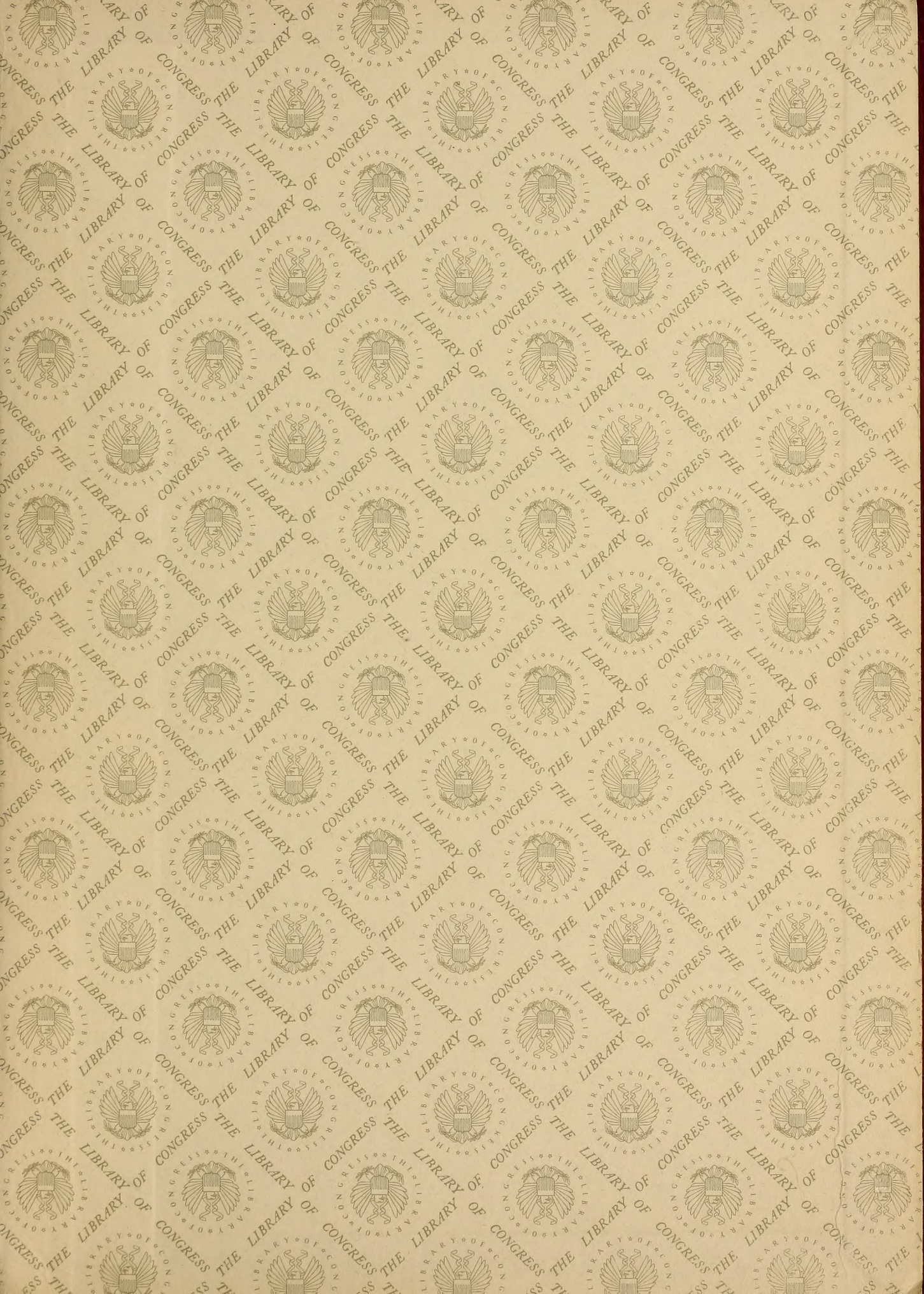
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